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The Hunter's Arcadia

Parker Gillmore

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THE HUNTER'S ARCADIA.



CARAÇAL (*Felis Caraçal*).

Frontispiece.

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THE
HUNTER'S ARCADIA

BY
PARKER GILLMORE

AUTHOR OF
"GREAT THIRST LAND," "A RIDE THROUGH HOSTILE AFRICA," "THE AMPHIBIAN'S VOYAGE,"
"ALL ROUND THE WORLD," "GUN, ROD, AND SADDLE," "ADVENTURES IN THE
ROCKY MOUNTAINS," ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

I WILL here repeat a conversation I had with an *employé* of the Government ; from it the reader can take his conclusions :

“Sir, you dress field sports in Colonies in an attractive garb.”

“Not more so than they deserve.”

“A man of your years should be ashamed of himself ! You will have all the youngsters going in for rifles, horses, and dogs, when they should be studying stock-raising, irrigation, sub-soiling, and chemical manures.”

“Nothing of the kind. You have passed your life in a Government office at home, and so know as little of the outer and bigger world as the majority of stay-at-home Englishmen do—that is, about as much as an Irish pig does of social etiquette. Listen, and I will give you my reasons for encouraging a love of field sports in those youths that emigrate.

Excitement of some kind they must have; so the choice is between the nearest canteen, where drinking to excess and gambling on credit are rampant, or to shooting, fishing, and hunting. In pursuit of these last mentioned the sojourner returns home to his unattractive shanty too tired and too hungry to again go forth, yet invigorated and strengthened by his exercise. In the pursuit of the former, property, health, and reputation are soon alike lost. Believe me, your boys, when away from paternal control in foreign lands, must have excitement; and the excitement derived from the chase is much healthier than that inhaled in a pot-house. Good morning, Mr. Bureaucrat, and may my remarks do you good."

I did not go into the country that this work treats of to make money by trading, but to see this little-known part of Africa, and enjoy the Field Sports it afforded; thus it may be that I take a more favourable view of its inhabitants than other visitors have.

There was as much romance in the realities of my life there, as the most inventive genius could invest fiction with.

As the perusal of this book may induce some of its readers to visit Bechuana Land, I will here give a list of those persons who furnished my outfit, and to whom I am in no small degree indebted for much of my enjoyment.

Messrs. Silver and Co., of Cornhill, can supply the wanderer with anything, and what is procured from this firm is sure to be excellent. Their port-manteaux, travelling bags, waterproof sheets and clothing cannot be too highly commended, while their gun-pads for reducing recoil are almost indispensable for firing such heavy charges as are now in vogue for killing large game. Fail not to have one of their revolvers. As far as natives are concerned they are not necessary, but there are some bastard descendants of Europeans knocking about, and this weapon is better than argument with such wild beasts. They (Messrs. Silver and Co.) can also supply the hunting-coat I always use, which will be found not only cool but capable of resisting thorns. Their explorer's room is always worthy of a visit, and the attentive and courteous *employés* of the firm thoroughly understand the use and appropriateness of each article. As your travelling is done by wagon you need not fear overloading yourself.

The rifle and smooth-bore supplied me by Mr. Tolley, of Conduit Street, were simply perfect weapons. Often I have been surprised how they withstood the hard usage they were submitted to. A friend of mine uses them now, and he writes that they are as good this day as when they left the shop.

Get a binocular from Dollond and Co., 1, Ludgate Hill; if you don't, you will regret it. The glass they supplied me with afforded me no end of pleasure and service.

As nothing is of greater importance to the sportsman than his ammunition, I would advise all contemplating a trip to tropical countries, more especially to those where large and savage animals are frequently to be encountered, to obtain their supply from Messrs. Kynoch and Co., of Witton, near Birmingham. During the last few years I have had forty thousand rounds from this well-known firm, and whether it was employed in rifle or smooth-bore, it always afforded the greatest satisfaction. The now old-fashioned paper cartridge never use when you can procure the new "Perfect" metallic one, for their superiority only requires to be tested in warm climates to be acknowledged. Unless actually compelled, never reload a cartridge, but if such has to be done, the "Perfect" will be found the best.

In conclusion, I have to tender my friend Mr. H. A. Bryden many thanks for the assistance he has afforded me as amanuensis.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE HUNTER'S ARCADIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

Kooruman—Baboons—Sand Grouse.

EVERY person visiting South Africa, who has shooting proclivities, and is gifted with the smallest powers of description, deems it his duty to the world at large, to give information regarding the sport to be had among the large or semi-large game of this portion of Her Majesty's dominions; but seldom do such writers say a word upon the smaller game which is to be found there in great abundance.

Great are the charms which surround the shooting of grouse and partridge, woodcock and snipe, hare or rabbit, whether on our moors or stubbles, meadows or uplands; but, great as these home pleasures are, I never can divest myself of the thought that all

B

one brings to bag are in a more or less domesticated state. If the reader, therefore, will travel with me in thought, at least, I will endeavour to tell him how and where game can be killed ranging over all the intermediate sizes between that of the green plover and roedeer, and to which the stigma of domestication cannot be attached.

Kooruman I had left two days previous to the occurrence of the day's sport of which I am about to give a sketch.

But Kooruman I cannot leave without saying a word or two descriptive of it and its surroundings, for a more maligned place it never was my fortune to visit. The very name of Kooruman brings back to me the impressions I had formed of it, culled, doubtless, from the numerous works of the members of different missionary societies. My early impressions, I find, are exactly identical with those of nine out of ten of the reading public, viz., a scattered settlement on a tiny spring, with deserts resembling those of the Sahara surrounding it, which stretch to the horizon, and even far beyond it, without a tree or shrub to break the monotony.

I feel certain that many, as well as myself,

formed the conclusion that when an unfledged missionary was ordered to Kooruman his life was to be in future one of constant hardship, trial and danger.

It is scarcely to be expected that when an explorer discovers elysiums, he is bound to publish to all the world the charms and attractions of the retreat he has become cognisant of; but still, for the sake of education, geography and progress—three subjects that missionary societies are ever thrusting down our throats—it is, in my humble opinion, a disgraceful act, and unworthy of an honourable body, to call a land flowing with milk and honey, and possessed of a population at once submissive and affectionate, a country of sterility and hardship, peopled by aborigines that lust for bloodshed and plunder. If there is an Eden on the face of this earth, it is Kooruman—Kooruman that has been represented by Moffat and McKenzie as a residence unfit for white men, and only one grade better than the Sahara Desert. Every description of sub-tropical fruit flourishes here to perfection, the indigenous grains of the country produce the most luxuriant crops, and the springs, which bubble forth from beneath their sandstone formation, give not only an ample supply of water for man and

beast, but lubricate many and many a mile of valley that would grow the necessities of life for the sustenance of a modern principality.

The youth of the present day think old men croakers; the matured man believes that the rising generation have deteriorated. In our fathers' and grandfathers' days no doubt the same opinions swayed them; but I feel confident that the missionaries of a past generation—those men, we will say, who occasionally formed banquets for the untutored savage—were infinitely superior to those persons who follow the same avocation at the present time.

After a rest of ten or twelve days at this earthly paradise, my bullocks being as fat and fit as good pasture, abundance of water and rest could make them, I pushed ahead to the north, resolved not to shoot till forty or fifty miles intervened between me and my starting-point. The roads were good, and the sand seldom heavy; thus my cavalcade averaged in its progress nothing less than twenty miles a day. Where I had arrived differed but little from the country that surrounded Kooruman; rolling hills, sparsely covered with brush, valleys clothed with sorghum and mealies, with here and there an occa-

sional kloof, planted by nature with timber worthy of a place in any nobleman's park or horticultural display.

During the night perfect quiet reigned around our encampment; for know, kind reader, that the lion, hyena and jackal, which, thirty years ago, knew this country as their habitat, have now been almost all killed off by the use of that diabolical invention of man's skill and research—strychnine. Baboons and monkeys, being vegetable feeders, have not suffered in the same ratio as have the carnivoræ; thus, from the top of some rocky krantz, occasionally would boom through the still night air the far from unpleasant voices of the sentinels of the first-mentioned species. Despised brute as the baboon is by all the human family, he is gifted with wonderful instincts; perhaps this causes man to be jealous, and therefore to dislike him. But let me say, could we imbue our soldier sentinels with the same indefatigable sense of duty and the same powers of detecting indications of danger, our troops would seldom suffer surprise or find an enemy penetrating their lines before being discovered. Early to bed and early to rise, whatever it promises in the old adage, in-

variably predicts luck in field sports in the regions I write of, for, from break of day till the sun has reached such an altitude as to make the heat unpleasantly powerful, all game, except the carnivoræ, whether fur or feather, are on the move.

The coldest hour of the twenty-four is ever that which precedes the break of day, and this was the time at which I turned out, shivering at the contrast I suffered between the temperature of the interior of my wagon and the uninterrupted night airs.

After raking the glowing embers together which remained as representatives of many a goodly branch that had fed our night fires, I next turned my attention to rousting out my attendants. This is always a difficult job, for the natives strongly object to leaving the warmth of their karosses before the sun has made its appearance. Nor is this to be wondered at when the observer notes how stiffened and cramped they appear after doing so, until exercise has caused their blood to increase its rapidity of circulation. It would be imagined that past experience would teach them to provide better protection against cold, but it does not; the kaross which they shivered under the previous night is good

enough and fit enough for all purposes of the future, and so on to the end of time.

After much grunting, yawning, stretching, and, no doubt, numerous complaints, if not curses, at the inexorable taskmaster whom they have to serve, Cookey, a fat, oleaginous and on occasions cheeky scoundrel, puts in an appearance, not to perform his duties, as might be imagined, but to criticise in no favourable terms that part of them which I had taken upon myself to perform.

My morning meal invariably consisted of a stew or hash left from the previous dinner, which, washed down with a cup of strong coffee, I found an excellent preparation for a hard morning's work.

As feathered game was the object of my expedition, the greyhounds were secured to the wagons, and Donna, my pointer, was taken in a leash by my hunting attendant, a stalwart Zulu, who had strong sporting proclivities, which, however, were seldom displayed till he had shaken off by exercise the chills he was suffering from, or a shot or two had been fired.

First I pursued a course which took me to the low ground edging upon cultivation. While doing

this several easy shots were presented at sand grouse, familiarly known here as Namaqua partridge. These are of three distinct varieties, each differing in colour and also in habit, the first being denominated the double-banded sand grouse, the second, variegated sand grouse, and the third, Namaqua sand grouse or partridge.

In size they are all similar, being about the weight of our woodcock, although of considerably greater length, owing to the elongation of the exterior tail feathers. During the morning and evening they are usually found in small coveys, but during the day, when the uplands are their favourite habitat, more generally they will be flushed in pairs. The whirr which they make at rising is so startling and abrupt, and their velocity of flight so great, that the nervous sportsman invariably finds that shooting sand grouse is not his forte. Moreover, they carry away a tremendous lot of shot, and in this respect quite equal our home-bred bird the wood-pigeon.

The first two varieties mentioned invariably come to water immediately after sunrise and when the sun goes down, while the third variety drink about



VARIEGATED SAND GROUSE (*Pterocles variegatus*).

To face page 8.

half-past ten or eleven a.m. On these occasions they are most interesting to watch; for, arriving in pairs, sometimes in threes, they wheel about over the drinking-place till their numbers are augmented into dozens, when, with a swoop, they make a descent of such rapidity as is generally expected only to be performed by members of the falcon family. When in large parties their flight resembles very much that of golden plover; yet, to my thinking, it is of a very much bolder and more determined character.

As I have spoken of the sub-family *Pterodinae*, it affords me great pleasure to place before my readers an excellent likeness of the variegated sand grouse (*Pterocles variegatus*). The two others, double-banded sand grouse (*Pterocles bicinctus*) and the Namaqua sand grouse (*Pterocles Namaqua*), will be found further on, as incidents connected with them occur. This group is the more interesting, as the *habitat* of the last-mentioned is so extensive that I have shot them in Manchuria, Mongolia, Asia Minor, Russia and Northern Africa, as well as in the country this book treats of, viz., the plateau lands of the interior of Southern Africa. This family is unknown in the Americas.

CHAPTER II.

EN ROUTE.

Guinea Fowls—Successful Shots.

As I expected larger game, and did not wish to alarm the neighbourhood, I on this occasion allowed the sand grouse to go on their way without molestation; the result was, as is usually the case where forbearance is practised, I soon had my reward, for, at the entrance to a ravine sparsely covered with brush, and here and there producing a stunted mimosa tree, I heard the well-known metallic sound produced by guinea fowl—even the Bechuanas have observed the peculiarity of this note, and in consequence, frequently call the bird “chinky-chinky.”

Of all the game birds of South Africa, this is, probably, the most numerous, and I have frequently seen it in droves, not of hundreds, but of thousands. In truth, I do not think I exaggerate when I say that near Secheli's, on an extensive clear space of

ground, which once had been a densely populated village, and which was situated in proximity to a *poort*, in which there was a strong fountain, I saw a flock of these interesting and eminently game birds, which must have numbered very many thousands; in fact, it appeared to me at the time as if they covered more than a couple of acres; and so densely packed were they, that a rifle ball fired into their midst could not have failed in finding a billet.

As the guinea fowl when young is one of the very best birds that can be obtained for the table, and as its succulence was equally appreciated by my Zulu attendant as by myself, his talents and mine were soon devoted to obtaining a few of these very wily specimens of the *Gallinæ* family, as additions to our table luxuries. The guinea fowl is pre-eminently a suspicious bird, and it has every reason to be so, for it is a favourite prey, not only of the lords of creation, but of every skulking fox or hyena, as well as of every hawk that can muster pluck enough to attack a comparatively defenceless creature, whose only attribute of safety against what should be contemptible foes exists in its superiority of size.

Having obtained the wind, a precaution that never

must be neglected in the pursuit of game in every part of the world, and more particularly so in Africa. I handed my swarthy attendant my shot gun, and relieved him of my rifle. This course I took for the reason that at this hour, with a little judicious management, guinea fowl, when perched, can easily be stalked to within fifty yards, and their size makes them as large a target as an ordinary "Hielander's" capacious bonnet. But there is another reason for substituting ball for shot, and a very good one too—the guinea fowl will carry away such a dusting of No. 6 or 5 shot as would knock the best rocketeer that you ever looked at, into an inanimate body.

Thus Zulu and Donna and self crept forward, not with that care that either of the party would have taken if approaching a hartebeest or gemsbok, but with prudence sufficient to keep our flapping garments out of sight, and the keen and blood-thirsty glance of our eyes undistinguishable.

Like the American wood grouse, this bird is not much alarmed at the report of a gun; the same victim will often stand several shots without shifting its position, and many members of the same family can be killed in succession when perched together,

provided always you shoot the lower ones first. The cause of this, in my belief, is that if a bird on the upper branch of a tree falls within gaze of its comrades, the lower members of the family believe that he has taken to flight from fear, and thus follow his example, as doubtless, from the elevated station he was placed in, he was regarded as the look-out, and, therefore, warner of danger.

But, having got within rifle shot, I soon disposed of a brace, and would no doubt have succeeded further in adding to my bag, but that Donna, ever the most obstreperous of her breed when the day was early, managed to slip her leash, and, regardless of consequences, rushed forward to perform what apparently she more delighted in than any other part of her professional service, viz., retrieving the dead or maimed. One glimpse of her spotted coat was sufficient; with one accord all the birds, on rapid wing, took flight to neighbouring localities, deemed safer from intrusion.

Where water is scarce, and the traveller and his beasts suffer in consequence, the presence of the guinea fowl is always more than welcome, for it is never to be found far from vley or spring.

If these birds happen to be in large flocks and found early in the morning, say an hour or more after sun-up, their back trail will invariably take you to the nearest water. If late in the day, the direction in which they are heading will indicate where the precious liquid is to be found, for, unless alarmed by some of their numerous enemies, they seldom use their wings in flight. During the greatest heat of the day, when all animated nature in this country seeks rest and shelter, they will occasionally be found grouped together under the shadow of the big flesh-leaved *mapani*, or other equally umbrageous shrub, but as soon as this shelter ceases to be necessary again they are upon their march seeking for food, and so great is their velocity of foot and untiring energy in getting over the ground, that I confidently believe they frequently cover a space of thirty miles between sunrise and sunset. As in England, these birds are frequently domesticated by the Boers and such Bechuanas as live in permanent stations, but they are bad mothers, and consequently domestic fowls are generally employed as foster parents.

All know well the dreadful concern that a hen

manifests when the ducklings she has hatched leave her protecting care to indulge their natural proclivities for swimming and dabbling in the nearest accessible water. Now, the young guinea fowl has a peculiarity in its nature which very much disagrees with its foster parents' wishes; for, instead of being satisfied to roost under her maternal wings, as soon as the young bird has been furnished by nature with the smallest powers of flight, nothing will satisfy it but to pass its time of rest upon the highest roosting-place in the neighbourhood.

The South African guinea fowl in its native state is wonderfully prolific, for it seldom lays less than fifteen eggs, and often the number exceeds twenty; they are a beautiful pale buff colour, and are speckled with pale gray. One variety alone I have met with here which has been named *Numida cornuta* by Finch and Hartlaub, and *Numida mitrata* by Layard. Their food consists of grass, seeds and insects, more especially grasshoppers; they also appear specially fond of a small bulbous root, not unlike that of the snowdrop, to which all the gallinaceous birds show great partiality, and which also is an especial favourite with both Bushmen and Bechuanas.

CHAPTER III.

GOOD SPORT.

The Pauw—A Stalk—A Porcupine.

ALTHOUGH no advocate for promiscuous application of the whip, there are certainly some dogs that require an occasional application of it. Donna was one of these; but my indulgence of her ever deserved to be urged as an excuse for her wilfulness and disobedience. Thus, as it was not always convenient to tie her up, she was permitted to run with the greyhounds when on the line of march, and as on such occasions buck and jackals would at times cross the road, off would go the whole pack in pursuit, the pointer invariably keeping a good position in the hunt, and awakening the echoes with her deep, mellow voice. These were unquestionably the red letter days in the calendar of her life, for nothing did she love more, when the chase was successful, than getting the victim by the throat, when it was in-

deed a hard task to force her to loose her hold. Such escapades of course made her headstrong, but it was surprising how soon a little severity brought her to a proper sense of the manner in which a respectable, matronly, well-bred pointer ought to conduct herself when taken alone into the field. Thus Donna got a talking to and a little corporeal punishment for rushing in after the guinea fowls, and after the punishment was over affairs settled down harmoniously into the groove of working order.

Turning my steps again towards the flats, I espied a large extent of ground which had once been cultivated. Knowing such land ever to be the favourite haunt of the pauw (*Otis kori* of Chapman), I carefully scanned it over with the hope of obtaining one, for it is a prize equally acceptable on the score of its beauty of plumage and richness of flavour when properly cooked.

The average weight is about 30 lb., although some have been shot that turned the scale at 70 lb., but these very large birds are scarce, as I have come across only one of such a size in my numerous and protracted wanderings in this country.

This *rencontre* was on the banks of the Limpopo,

about a day's trek to the southward and westward of where the road branches off from that river to Bamanwato. It was in the afternoon, my friend Mr. Frederick Drake and myself being at the time about a mile in front of our wagons, on the look-out for the larger species of Francolin, which here abound, when, to our surprise, an enormous pauw came from the bush into the path, there halted for a few seconds to take stock of the intruders, and passed again into the bush on the opposite side.

The distance it was in advance of us was upwards of 150 yards, and the time permitted for my friend to shoot, for he was armed with a rifle, too short for him to do so. With just a hope that I should get within range of this noble trophy, I quickly substituted cartridges of lopers (buckshot) for the No. 3 that my chambers had previously contained. As the pauw is wonderfully swift of foot, we now hurried forward, I following in the course it was supposed to have taken, while my friend made a detour to get to windward of it, and thus cut off its retreat.

Our finesse was well rewarded, for the giant bird flushed within sixty or seventy yards from where

I stood, and promptly the contents of both barrels rattled audibly on its beautiful variegated cinnamon-brown plumage. I felt confident that I had done some damage, for my double-barrel, a 10-bore, was a remarkably hard hitter, and I had that intuitive knowledge, which all experienced sportsmen are aware of, which tells that I had held my tubes straight.

For the first fifty paces the pauw indicated no other acknowledgment of the peppering I had given him save by parting with a few feathers; but now the affair took a different phase, for the stricken bird commenced towering in gradually increasing circles, with a velocity and strength of wing scarcely to be expected from such mammoth game.

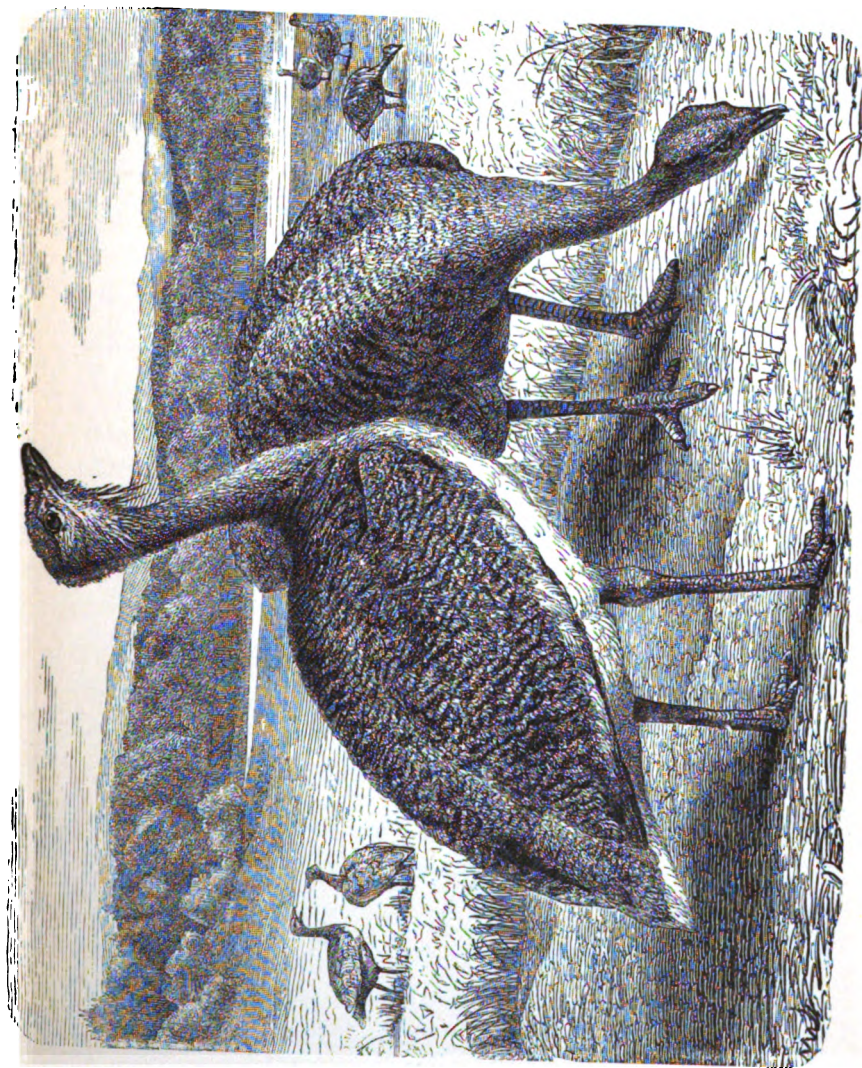
To so great an altitude did it ascend that it quite strained my vision to retain sight of it, and I fear I was almost about to give up the task of tracing its erratic flight, when downward it descended, not perpendicularly, but at about an angle of 45 degrees, which caused it to pitch into an open stretch of bare ground several hundred yards in front of myself and friend. The pauw was not dead, so, instead of turning upon his back, as most towerers do under such circumstances, he simply pulled himself together

by the assistance of a good shake, and rapidly made for some thick brush that margined the course of the river. Now was my friend's turn: at about a range of 200 yards he was able to draw a bead upon the bustard's shoulder, and promptly put a bullet through it.

Such an admonition, life itself could not deny, so the bustard turned over and yielded to the inevitable as quietly and rapidly as ever did grouse or partridge. Although this bird was not weighed, I am convinced it would have turned the scale at 70 lb.

Unable to say so with certainty, still I believe that there are two distinct species of pauw, these large birds invariably being found, as I have learned from inquiry, upon the bush veldt, while the smaller ones select for their haunts the open Karroo flats and grass lands. It is strange that none of the few accepted naturalists of South Africa have observed or made this distinction; but the natives, who display wonderful acumen in distinguishing and noting the varied characteristics of all the game to be found in their country, denominate the larger species as GOM pauw,*

* (Query)—Any relation to the G.O.M., whom ranting politicians and mouthy demagogues blindly follow?



PAUW (*Otis kori*).

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the smaller, Veldt paww. Doubtless, the Bechuanas and Hottentots have obtained these patronymics from the Boers, as well as numerous others, more especially such as are indicative of the game of the country.

When about to give up my search as useless over the flat which I had reached, my Zulu companion placed his hand quietly upon my arm, and directed my attention to a shallow dip in the lately cultivated meadow, covered with greener grass than grew on the surrounding edges, indicative that more moisture was there to be found than in the surrounding country. My attendant insisted that he there saw a paww, but my powers of vision did not enable me to confirm his assertion. However, I knew the lad was right, for association had taught me that his powers of sight were unusually good; so, without hesitation, I arranged the following plan of operations. The Zulu to make a detour of a mile or so, taking with him the dog and using every precaution to keep out of sight of the quarry till he had gained a quarter of a mile or more to windward. This being accomplished, he was slowly to advance upon the game, being careful by his manner to disguise his intention of driving it before him. This method would doubtless have suited ad-

mirably, for I was in a well-screened position to leeward; however, the plans of men and mice are said often to "gang alee," and on this occasion mine certainly did so, and in a rather unexpected manner.

My faithful follower had scarcely left me more than a minute before he was well out of sight, from the stealthy mode he had adopted of hiding his presence, when, to my intense disgust, I heard a yell from my pointer and a shout from the man.

Glancing rapidly to my front, I saw that the paww was alarmed, from the way in which he held his head aloft and carefully scanned the surroundings with inquisitive eyes. An old stager this bird evidently was, for, his fears being once excited, he had no intention of again relapsing into feelings of security while in a suspicious neighbourhood. So, with one or two quick jerks of his tail, indicating his displeasure, he stretched his broad pinions and hastened to put space between himself and unknown danger.

With possibly not a blessing on my tongue, I hurried forward to know the cause of such an unexpected and thoroughly out-of-place disturbance, nor was I long kept in ignorance, for on gazing over a

ridge but a short distance in front of me, I perceived the black fellow cutting up antics in a dry watercourse which could well have rivalled the most adroit displays of an acrobat.

In less time than it takes to state so in writing, I was by his side, and found that the dog was the cause of my disappointment. The Zulu, in following out my instructions, had pushed rapidly forward, and having more regard to secreting himself from the game that he was intent on driving towards me, than to the objects that immediately surrounded him, had almost tumbled head over heels on a porcupine. Such a godsend for sport was not to be resisted by the irrepressible Donna, who, regardless of quills and the punishment which she was sure to suffer in assailing such an invulnerable enemy, seized the prickly one by the snout, and held fast to her fortunate grip, as if on her success in doing so depended her future existence.

Now, a Cape porcupine is not much inferior in point of size to a well-grown clumber spaniel, and, moreover, is possessed of extraordinary powers of limb, so my black fellow found it no easy job to get the combatants parted, and in his attempt to do so

had received several quills in that most sensitive part of a black man's person—his shins. The combat was in full force when I put in my appearance, and it may be said with confidence that the bitch so far was having a good time, as luck had favoured her in giving her the only grip that she could have obtained without being fearfully punished; and well Donna knew this, for it was not her first encounter, by long odds, with such a living *chevaux de frise*. Hitherto the Zulu had only endeavoured to separate the pugilists; now, as the game we had been in search of was scared, the flesh-pots returned to his memory, possibly accompanied by feelings of vindictiveness against the animal which had turned his legs into pincushions, and he with promptness brought his well-tried and constant companion, his knobkerrie, into play, an adroit blow or two from which soon decided the struggle. Although I had wanted a paww, I had obtained a very good substitute for it. In my attendant's opinion I have little doubt but that he considered that I had received half-a-crown in change for a florin, for the porcupine is esteemed by the natives, and justly so, the most succulent food that the Veldt provides.

CHAPTER IV.

PLEASANT PLACES.

African Hares—Small Buck.

A PROPER man is kind to his dog, and kindness to his fellow-creature is, or ought to be, therefore, with him a paramount duty ; thus I devoted myself to the extraction of numerous quills—no easy thing, for the confounded spines are possessed of barbs which have as much tenacity of hold as those of a fish-hook ; but my patient was submissive, and yielded with a good grace to an operation which unquestionably was painful. There is a wonderful contradiction in these black people's character ; for, the moment they become sick, they at once conclude that their ailment is unto death, and refuse all comfort or consolation, simply submitting to what they deem the inevitable ; while, on the other hand, they will yield to any amount of external bodily injuries without murmur or complaint.

In the meantime, Hendrick, my driver, who had

a *penchant* for wandering about on the Veldt when his master's eye was not upon him, had heard the disturbance which had necessarily accompanied the late adventure, so very appropriately joined our party ; but, to his disappointment, he was too late to enjoy any of the fun, and just in time to be transformed into a beast of burden to take our spoils of the chase to camp.

On some burnt ground which had lately been passed over by fire to improve the pasturage, I knocked over a brace of hares, such places ever being a certain find for these animals. Scarcely had they been placed in the bag when I flushed from a clump of charred brush a large covey of what is doubtless one of the finest game birds of South Africa, namely, the larger partridge of the colonists, but which is in reality the Orange River francolin (*Francolinus Gariepensis*), a bird of great beauty of plumage, as large as a hen pheasant, and withal as good a table addition as the most fastidious taste could desire. I had no difficulty in obtaining a brace, as they lay remarkably well, being far from wary where cover exists, so after the first flight I quickly marked them down, and further reduced the number of the family

by a lucky right barrel which tumbled over two, and a fortunate left that winged a third. This party was originally composed of fourteen, not an unfrequent number, although nine or ten, in the majority of instances, form the covey.

A peculiarity I must not fail to mention in reference to these sporting birds is, that after being flushed twice it is almost impossible to force them again to take the wing, and almost as difficult to find them, even with the assistance of a dog. Like the Virginian partridge of the United States, I almost believe that they have the power of withholding their scent, and that they do not move from the place on which they drop. The well-known dryness of African upland ground cannot fail to assist them materially in a device ordained by Nature for their greater security.

The South African hare I have passed over without description, for it much resembles our home production, with the exception that it is a fourth smaller, and provided with fuller and longer ears. It runs well before greyhounds, but goes to earth in ant-bear or ratel holes whenever opportunity presents itself.

Our English hare, we all know, is wonderfully

quick in turning when pursued by a greyhound ; its African brother, I am inclined to believe, is even more so. I had among my kennel six of the best bred English greyhounds that I could procure for money ; in fact, two of them had been Cup winners, and a third had run second in the Puppy Stakes at an important meeting in the Midland Counties. The last was a lady, rather undersized, but clever to a degree ; in fact, in this respect I have never seen her equal, yet I have witnessed an African hare on open ground give her, single-handed, so much trouble to kill, that I would have despaired of a successful finish had I not well known this lady's gameness and stoutness.

The sun having now got high, I was about to return to our encampment, when I was joined by my shooting companion, a gentleman who, from long acquaintance with foreign field sports, had ceased to believe in bird guns, and looked with contempt on all sport in which the rifle did not play the principal part ; hence the true sportsman. A more plodding, persevering, and careful sportsman it would be difficult to find, and the result was that he seldom or never failed to bring home quarry worthy of his skill in the art of venery. His trophies were not often

numerous, but, taking the number of head that he killed one day with another, his average record of sport would be found an exceedingly good one.

On the morning in question he had bagged three small buck, two being steinbok and the other a duiker; thus on this morning our combined spoils were two guinea fowl, two and a half brace of larger partridge, two hares, three buck, and last, though not least, a prime-conditioned, full-grown porcupine.

I am quite aware that stay-at-home sportsmen of the modern school, those who are addicted to driving, warm corners and such other innovations of the age, may smile at the lowness of the number of head brought to bag, but the combined weight of the game killed was almost a load for a horse, and was procured before the sun had more than half reached his meridian.

It is surprising to see with what deftness the natives can divest an animal of its skin, with no other aid than that afforded them by the edge of the assegai blade; in fact, this weapon plays a prominent part in all their avocations, and is as constantly in use, and as skilfully handled, as is a jack-knife by a school-boy.

The skins of nearly all the smaller antelopes are

seldom utilised for any purpose. This, I think, must result from their abundance, and, consequently, unappreciatedness, terms too often synonymous, for, without doubt, there are numerous services to which they could be applied. An animal the size of a steinbok or duiker, if killed at home, would be considered by the sportsman as a great trophy, therefore I will give a brief description of each.

Commencing with the steinbok (*Tragulus rupestris*), it is one of the most beautiful and graceful animals to be found in any part of the world. The eye of the gazelle has been lauded from time immemorial, by writers of both verse and prose, as unequalled for its tenderness and beauty of expression. In this species it is markedly deserving of admiration, the languishing glance of a Spanish señorita, or the timid, startled gaze of an Eastern houri, falling far short of the liquid softness characteristic of the orb of this charming creature. Its head is short and pointed, the muzzle being remarkably small, while the mouth is so dainty and so beautifully placed that for it to feed upon other than the most delicate herbage would almost appear sacrilege. The ears are much developed, broad and round, while the tail, scarcely an inch in length,

might almost be considered rudimentary. The limbs, although possessed of great muscular development, taper from the knee downwards to the finest dimensions, while the hoofs that grace the extremities are so small as to leave a spoor scarcely larger than the point of a lady's finger. When it is considered that this antelope stands quite twenty-two inches at the shoulder, and is about thirty-six inches in length, such an impression for its foot to make is obviously very small. Its general colour is from rufous to a cinnamon brown, sometimes almost passing into red upon the back, while the stomach is as pure white as driven snow.

The female does not possess horns, but the male has these adornments, which scarcely exceed four inches in length, the base, which is wrinkled, being scarcely larger than a pencil, and decreasing gradually to the finest of points. On emergency, this little gem of the animal creation can use these tiny weapons with great effect, and is far from loth to do so when other means of escape are denied it.

It inhabits indifferently the bush or grass veldt of high grounds, and is generally to be found in pairs or solitary. The steinbok affords admirable sport

with greyhounds, and if, perchance, it should obtain more than a hundred yards of law when started from its form, it will take a fleet greyhound indeed to pull it down. None but strong, large, upstanding dogs are suitable for this amusement, for frequently the grass and bush through which they pass is so high and resisting that a lightly-made pursuer is placed at an obvious disadvantage.

Once the sportsman learns the habits of this buck, it is not difficult to get within easy shooting range, if the rifle be employed, as it has the invariable habit of taking advantage of the first intervening obstacle it encounters, behind which it will frequently remain for minutes, watching the movements of its alarmer. In approaching it at such a time, the eyesight should never be directed to its hiding-place, and the advance should be made gradually and indirectly. Quick, keen powers of vision are of great advantage to the sportsman on such occasions, as this animal's coat blends wonderfully with the colour of the herbage found in its habitat.

CHAPTER V.

NATIVE SPORTSMEN.

Duiker Buck—Hebes—Change of Camp.

It is a wonderful circumstance, and especially applicable to African antelopes, that between the inner and outer skins are ever to be found great numbers of immense grubs, some of them not unfrequently upwards of an inch in length, which, when exhumed from their domicile, are possessed of great activity and vitality. These larvæ must cause great irritation, or even pain, to the animals on which they subsist, and the beautiful little steinbok appears to be more abundantly supplied with these pests than any other of his race.

The duiker bok (*Cephalophus mergens*), of which my companion had also killed a specimen, is a more solid and less graceful animal than the last described; its height and length are also greater, while the

points of its horns have a universal tendency to bend forward, and are possessed of a longitudinal ridge in the front, which commences at the base and disappears after passing through the annulations. Its colour is dark olive above, and white beneath, with a dark streak passing down the fore legs, which terminate in black fetlocks. Its tail, which is tipped with white, is about eight inches long, and the face is possessed of a long suborbital slit on either side. The muzzle is bare. Both sexes carry horns, but those of the female are very short, and almost buried in a tuft of rufous hair, which forms an apex on the crown. The name duiker is obviously given it from its habit of diving into the thickest bush when disturbed, in which it has a wonderful facility for concealing itself, much assisted by a power it possesses of lowering its body almost to the level of the ground upon which it is standing.

Its speed is not equal to that of the steinbok; moreover, unlike the other animal, if not too hardly pressed by dogs, it invariably returns to the place from which it is roused. Thus it affords admirable sport before hounds, as many of the late Natal

garrison are well aware. It is possessed of extraordinary vitality, and, further, will assume death if no other means of escape presents itself.

About midday we were visited by a hunting party of Batlapins. Their success was apparent from the number of kooran and other small game which they had with them. The only weapons that I observed among the crowd were knob-kerries. These sticks are of the thickness of the first joint of a trout rod, about two feet long, and terminate in a knob, varying in size from a duck's egg to a man's fist. With this implement they are wonderfully adroit up to thirty yards, for their skill in marksmanship would frequently bring shame upon many a would-be sportsman armed with a gun.

These people are a happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care lot ; they had many a joke to crack among themselves, probably at my expense, and chaffed each other most unmercifully on the bad skill displayed by some of them in their late hunt. But, sharp and pointed as their jokes evidently were, none lost their temper, thus teaching a lesson that could often be well followed by white men. Our attendants received these visitors with the hospitality they invariably extend to all

strangers, the thought never arising in their minds that they are giving away their employers' food.

If once you obtain in these parts the *sobriquet* of a "mean white man," it is bound to stick to you wherever you travel, and will do you no end of harm ; thus it is better to grin and bear without remonstrance a pack of hungry savages, who are stowing away an amount of food that would probably be sufficient to sustain your whole party for the next twenty-four hours. Snuff, although of no use as an article of trade, is wonderfully appreciated by these people, when given to them gratuitously. It is a bribe that seldom fails to make them loquacious, and as I wanted information in regard to the state of the roads and the frequency of water in front of me, and was fortunately provided with some of Taddy's fragrant preparation, I had recourse to its influence. But scarcely had each received his *quantum*, than the sharp cry of a kooran announced the presence of that bird in our immediate vicinity. In an instant each Batlapin was on his legs, a line was formed with the precision and dexterity of drilled soldiers, and a hasty advance made in the direction from which the sound emanated. Soon after three birds were flushed

in succession, and each was as rapidly knocked over. I will not say that there were no misses, for three or four kerries were thrown at a time, but this I will state, that none of the game got away.

Scarcely had the koorans been bagged when three of the double-banded sand grouse (*Pterocles bicinctus*) rose almost at the feet of these primitively-armed hunters. Five kerries in an instant were hurled at them, the result being that two of the beautiful birds were added to their rapidly-increasing bag. The skill of these men with this simple weapon would, I feel confident, soon tell seriously upon a well-populated warren. The chief of this *coterie*, with an air of generosity worthy of a prince, offered me these last trophies as a present, but with grave courtesy I declined to deprive him of such treasures. This self-denial was the result of a knowledge of how many hours' stewing were necessary before the birds became sufficiently tender for ordinary teeth to be able to masticate them. These black fellows at once saw that I appreciated their little joke, and laughed immoderately in consequence.

As this group (sand grouse) is, I believe, only to be found in the old world, it possesses more than ordinary

interest for the ornithologist, the paramount interest being retained by scientists for the apteryx or dodo, or other equally inelegant representatives of living or defunct species. To me, sand grouse occupy the same relative position towards birds that Kate Greenaway's or Caldecott's children do to the human family. They are, in very truth, regular little Dolly Vardens in perfection of outline, beauty and variety of plumage, and in grace and energy of movement, while their little feather-trowsered legs impart an air of modesty that is most *piquante*. Those folks that have crossed the Atlantic have doubtlessly heard "bees" spoken of by our cousins. Now there are several kinds of "bees" in America, such as quilting "bees," logging "bees," and husking "bees." The double-banded sand grouse has a "bee" of its own, which I will designate a courting "bee." About midday, in spring, these little pets will assemble, possibly to the number of a dozen, and dance the most extraordinary and intricate figures, in which all take a part. From the back of an ant-hill I have often watched them at this amusement. In it there is none of the poetry of the gliding waltz, but all the energy and go of the Scotch reel as it is performed north



DOUBLE-BANDED SAND GROUSE (*Pterocles biniunctus*).

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of the Tweed after the advent of the wee small hours and a modicum of "whuskey." Winsome lassies and gallant chieles show to great perfection then, especially when the latter are without "breeks," and so do the little sand grouse when they are footing a measure on the distant South African veldt.

Scarcely had we returned to the camp-fire when a party of ladies put in their appearance, relations of the first comers. Of their personal charms I cannot speak enthusiastically, although one, if she had been white-washed and got up with an ample supply of the starch of European apparel, minus dress-improver (for Nature has furnished all this race with abundance of after-development), might have passed muster in a crowd.

These Hebes would take no denial, so my snuff-box had again to be produced, and marvellously did their nostrils devour its contents.

Clothing is no doubt indispensable in our climate and necessary in civilised countries; but I cannot help thinking that it is far from useful or ornamental among these primitive people. However, nudity is the first established custom attacked by the Missionary, the result, doubtless, of prudish ideas; but I defy any

one who has been thrown much in contact with unclothed races to discover anything immodest or disgusting in this want of covering. On the contrary, among the numerous black tribes that I have visited, I have found that the thin veneer of civilisation imparted by the introduction of European dress has not wrought a corresponding advantage in their morality.

Bechuana women are ever ready for a scamper across the veldt when aught is to be obtained by it, and a wide, voluminous skirt cannot fail to be found a great inconvenience when perpetrating such pranks ; so the females, forgetful of their adornment, gather up their skirts to an elevation which cannot help bringing upon the wearers ridicule instead of respect.

I acknowledge that a dress of variously blended colours is exceedingly attractive when worn by a young and pretty girl at her father's breakfast table, or sets off to advantage a ruddy, well-developed domestic servant, and is most appropriate on both, but on a black woman's back it looks so curiously out of place as to kindle a feeling of detestation for all such and kindred manufactures.

When the sun indicated 3 p.m. the horses were saddled, as we had determined to shoot over the

vicinity of a vley well known as the favourite haunt of both pauw and kooran. While we rode off the oxen were being mustered for trekking, as it was resolved to change our camp to a fresh locality ten miles in our front, for we had heard that springbok already had been seen in that neighbourhood, probably the advance guard of the *trekbokken*, or migrating herds of this animal, that annually inundate the colony in such immense numbers as to cause astonishment in the beholders as to where they came from and whither they are going.

A *trekbokken* is one of the things in this world that a sportsman ought to witness, for it is a most extraordinary sight, both from the number of animals composing the migratory herd and the effect that their movements and presence produce upon the surface of the landscape.

When I was in Africa ten years ago the number of springbok was so much greater than at the present time that I fear, if the reduction of this game goes on in the same ratio as it has done, one of the most wonderful exhibitions of animal life that can be beheld will entirely cease.

The extinction of the springbok (*Gazella cucchore*)

would be a great loss to the colony, for they furnish a vast amount of wholesome and excellent food for both the white and black population, while their graceful appearance and brilliant colouring ever make a most attractive addition to the picture. Remove the game from these immense flats and rolling uplands, and their fascination is entirely destroyed ; but, alas ! I dread that such is to take place, and it will occur, for guns are now numerous in the hands of all, without distinction of race or colour, ammunition abundant and cheap, while the shooters, although not always the best of shots, are skilled stalkers and insatiable in their love of slaughter.

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL HISTORY.

Snakes—Secretary Birds—The “Ringkaal.”

LEAVING the prospect of this imminent and grievous catastrophe to be treated further on, we will hasten forward for the scene of the afternoon's recreation, which we found in every way suited to our purpose. Before dismissing our horses, my friend having remarked upon the number of secretary birds (*Secretarius reptilivorus*) that were hunting the locality, declared his intention of keeping to the high grounds, for “where the vultures were, there you would assuredly find the carrion (snakes),” he remarked.

Now, if ever a person had a dread of snakes, it was this gentleman, for visions of them seemed to go between him and his rest. He was constantly seeing snakes; wherever he went he was sure to come across snakes, whether in the camp or out of

it, on the veldt or in the kloofs, in fact, everywhere except in his boots; there, I can confidently assert, he never did see snakes, for if he did not display the insignia of the blue-ribbon, he was a great believer in its demonstrative colour. Thus no amount of persuasion would induce him to accompany me into the low-lying ground, so again I had to shoot alone.

But a word on this strictly 'representative bird of the fauna of this locality I trust will not be out of place. Although the secretary bird cannot by any stretch of imagination be classed among the game of South Africa, from its frequent occurrence in the country I cannot pass it by without calling the reader's attention to it.

The name secretary has been bestowed upon it from the comparatively large feathers which project semi-erect from the apex of its head, and thus brought to the ideas of the original bestower of the title a similarity between its head and a clerk or secretary with quill pens stuck behind his ears.

It is not numerous in Great Namaqua Land or Damara Land, but in Bechuanaland, Griqua Land, Orange Free State, South African Republic and countries beyond, it becomes so abundant that it is

seldom that it is not to be observed as a prominent feature in the landscape. The greater part of its time is spent upon the ground searching for its food, which consists of rats, mice, tortoises, and lizards, even insects; but its principal prey, undoubtedly, are snakes; and hence its services are deemed so valuable, that in such countries as are populated by settlers a heavy fine is levied on whoever kills a representative of this interesting bird.

It is about four feet in height, the lower portion of the legs being remarkably long, thus giving to the observer the idea that he is looking at one of the waders rather than at a member of the *Accipitres*. The contour of its head and bill is bold and hawk-like, and well may the latter be so, for it is in truth a most formidable weapon, and capable of splitting the head of the largest puff-adder with a single blow. However, puff-adders do not willingly submit to this operation, thus frequently long and most exciting fights take place before the bird is able to accomplish its purpose.

The visage of the secretary bird is falconish in the extreme; if possible, more so than that of the actual bird it is compared to. This results doubtless from

the eyes being larger in proportion, the bill much longer and the head more flattened than any of the *Falconidæ*. It also possesses great power and swiftness of flight, in the action of which it much more resembles the eagle than the cranes or herons, to which (the latter) the inexperienced might at first sight judge it to belong, when viewed on the wing, from its lengthy legs projecting so far beyond its body.

To observe the secretary bird to perfection it must be seen while it is hunting. This duty of its life it performs in such a serious, methodical and resolute manner as almost to produce laughter. Slowly and unhesitatingly it walks forward, while its gaze is ever on the ground before it, and nothing, however insignificant, I feel convinced, ever escapes the vision of its fierce and powerful eyes. Its ordinary pace is a measured stride, about as rapid as that of soldiers when marching at slow time; but if necessity should call for an exhibition of speed, it can show such a turn of it as will keep an average horse in a canter.

From the fact that these most useful friends of man are seldom or never injured by the human family, it is not without difficulty that they can be forced to take flight—so much so, that I remember coursing

one for nearly ten minutes before I could induce it to take wing, and then it ceased flying the moment it noticed that I discontinued the pursuit.

When the secretary bird is attacking a small snake—one under three feet in length, suppose—it conducts the encounter in a most summary, off-handed manner, apparently treating the poison-fanged foe with the greatest *nonchalance*. It is done in this way:—With a few hurried steps, and the head and neck lowered, the assailant advances, and, when within reach of the enemy, it draws itself up to its full height, then presents the tip of one of its wings to the reptile, which rapidly strikes at it. This is again and again repeated, but the venomous teeth come into contact with nothing but the quill feathers. Snakes apparently are easily fatigued and unaccustomed to excitement and violent exercise, so their activity and caution gradually decrease, till, in an unguarded moment, they lay themselves open, and the powerful foot of the enemy is placed upon their body near the head, pinning it to the ground, and in another instant its brains are laid open. But when a large reptile is to be dealt with, the tactics of the encounter are differently conducted. I was

once eye-witness of one of these fights, and so interesting did I find it that, in giving an account of it *in extenso*, I trust I shall not trespass upon the reader's patience.

In a locality through which I was travelling, situated near the eastern limit of the Kalihari Desert, I found springbok very numerous and tame. Being extremely anxious to learn some of the minor details of the life of this beautiful and interesting animal, I deemed this a fitting opportunity. Thus, availing myself of the shelter of a dry river-bed, I got within a hundred and fifty yards of the objects of my curiosity. The wind exactly suited my purpose, so I determined, by the aid of several large ant-hills, to lessen the distance. A sparse karroo shrub further aided me in my effort, so when at length I raised my head, my hunting-cap being decorated with a wisp of grass and leaves to assist my purpose, I found that my dangerous presence was as yet undiscovered. Nearer to me than the antelopes, however, was a battle royal commencing to be fought between a secretary bird and what the Boers designate a "ringkaal," a species of snake that frequently grows to the length of seven or eight

feet. It is glossy jet black along the back, but from there gradually merges into ochre about the belly, and is decorated with a pure white ring around the neck—hence the Boer name. This is a very active serpent, and possesses a peculiarity of spitting at its adversaries, by which it can eject its secretion to a distance, some say of nine or ten feet; but six, I think, would be more like the mark. From this peculiarity the species is often known as the spitting serpent.

The “ringkaal” may not seek a fight, but if such should be forced upon it, well I know by experience that it is the last creature in the universe to avoid it.

Now the combatants, as far as pluck was concerned, were about equal; but, had I been a betting man, I would have backed the reptile.

The engagement soon commenced, and the activity of both belligerents was most surprising. For several minutes feints were made and blows returned, still neither appeared to have the advantage of the other.

The springboks also seemed much interested in what was taking place, for they assembled in a gradually increasing drove and watched with curious,

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startled gaze what was occurring, at a safe but short distance to windward.

Again the encounter was renewed, but in this second round the result seemed equally doubtful.

Then the secretary bird withdrew from it : after a rather lengthened pause, it uttered a prolonged harsh note, not unlike the cry of a sheep in pain. I supposed this was the result of its being wounded ; not so, for in a minute afterwards it was joined by a comrade, and the engagement was without delay resumed. The snake now began to have "*a bad time* ;" for, in spite of his activity and pluck, he was unable to face both ways, so got frequent blows from the strong armed wings of his assailants, one of which for an instant seemed to stupefy him.

This was the chance doubtlessly sought for. Instantaneously both birds seized the reptile, one near the neck, the other much farther back, and, as quick as thought, commenced bearing the wriggling, struggling body aloft. Up, up, they ascended, till an elevation of nearly a hundred yards was gained, when simultaneously they dropped their victim, and with closed wings descended to the earth with such velocity as to reach it as rapidly as their prey.



SECRETARY BIRD (*Secretarius reptiliivorus*).

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The snake was stunned, doubtlessly, but no time was left for him to recover, for as quick as thought he received a blow upon the head which settled matters.

The fall of the snake and descent of the birds struck terror into the springboks, and off they rushed to windward in one mass, each endeavouring to outstrip the other in speed, or to surpass his neighbour in the height of his wonderful bounds. Pretty, fascinating creatures, you are well named! Still it is to be regretted that a name could not have been found in our language that would have given also some better idea of your grace and perfection of form.

But we were not yet finished with the secretary birds. Now that the allies had conquered the common foe they fought for the booty. One would think that birds would have left such selfishness for the so-called lords of creation alone to display, more particularly as the booty was quite sufficient for the requirements of both.

I wanted the prey, so slipped in and took it, thus personifying the lawyer between two clients.

The ringkaal I had conveyed to my wagon,

then some distance off; still the head continued to distil clear poison quite an hour after its arrival.

Snakes are nothing like as numerous in South Africa as they are in the Western States of North America, and, as hunters invariably wear long boots, they are little to be dreaded here. The sportsman who funks them, and is therefore always looking for them, will find it a serious drawback to his success in killing game.

CHAPTER VII.

DUCK SHOOTING.

The Irrepressible Donna—The American Snipe.

DONNA, in spite of her morning exercise, had still plenty of go and zeal, so before the horses had left us ten minutes (they having been despatched to the proposed location of our new camp) the pointer commenced drawing upon game, and continued to do so for some time. This dog would never have satisfactorily exhibited at a field-trial, but for that very reason she was a rare good one to kill game over, after the rough edge of her passionate ardour for pursuit had become toned down. In fact, she was one of that kind of which I have heard men say that "it is only fit to be the companion of a poacher." Still, I never had any serious qualms of conscience at being seen in her company. Now it was evident both to herself and me that the birds were running ;

so, as soon as she saw that I was on the exact line that the game was taking, off she broke to the left at racing pace, and after making a detour of several hundred yards, headed it, taking every possible opportunity both to let it see and get her wind. The *ruse* worked admirably, for as I hurried forward, as if to meet her, three black-and-white winged kooran flushed, out of which I took a brace.

This bustard (*Otis afroides*) is a splendid bird, larger than a blackcock and very strong upon the wing. While in flight it is extremely clamorous, the voice being harsh and not unlike a frequent repetition of its own name (kooran). When forced to fly, it will frequently continue to do so for several minutes, not going off on end, but circling round at a considerable distance from the sportsman, as if to make a strict observation of him or to give warning to all game, whether furred or feathered, by its oft-repeated jarring, loud note, "that there is an intruder in their vicinity that it would be well to give a wide berth to."

The colour of this kooran is black, with a white bar across each wing; the irides are dark chocolate colour and the legs bluish-gray.

In spite of its fine appearance and exceedingly game look, it is far from a desirable addition to the table unless served as soup ; this it makes admirably, particularly with the help of a little Worcester sauce.

This description of game was so abundant this afternoon that soon I had half-a-dozen brace, so resolved to reserve my cartridges for something scarcer and probably more toothsome.

On arriving close to the margin of the water, I flushed a great number of snipe, but, my shot being much too large for such small fry, I let them go ; otherwise I do not think I should have been so self-denying, for I believe snipe shooting, when the birds are plentiful, to be the acme of sport with the shot gun. In Africa, as in other parts of the world that I have visited, the snipe is doubtlessly migratory, and the species here is identical with that of Europe. Sergeant Walsh, once of the 2nd Queen's Regiment (whom I have known for many years, he having served under me in China), is by far the best naturalist I know of in South Africa, and he confirmed me in this belief from the inspection of several specimens which I shot at Linikani, near Zeerust, Marico, Transvaal. Out of sight, out of mind, is here

applicable to a grateful country. Alas! had he but been a wind-bag politician, it would not have been so.

(The American species (*Scolopax Wilsonii*), of which I have made immense bags on the prairies of Iowa and Illinois, Audubon says varies from our home bird by having two more feathers in its tail or wings. I once told a large assembly of American sportsmen this, at a dinner they had hospitably given me at the principal restaurant in New York. My enthusiastic hosts when they heard it fairly made the room re-echo with shouts of "Bravo" or "Bully for the American snipe.")

In this marsh land I flushed a brace of those extremely wary birds, the curlew (*Numenius arquatus*). The first I killed dead, but the second was only winged, and fell into the water. Hesitating to waste a cartridge, for here they are scarce and consequently valuable, as soon as I had reloaded I went in pursuit of the cripple; but, to my surprise, for I was not before aware of it, I found that this curlew swims as well as a duck. I thus discovered that I had undertaken a task which was far from easy. Resolved not to be done, more especially as the eyes of my Zulu were upon me, I determined to distinguish myself,

and in doing so became nearly extinguished, for my foot caught a tangle of weeds, and, before I could prevent the catastrophe, went sprawling on all-fours into the black, slimy bottom. I soon recovered myself, it is true, but in what a state! wet through, and promiscuously plastered over with adhesive filth, the accumulation of years of decayed vegetation. If this misadventure had happened to any other person, I should have laughed; but when I saw that my native was enjoying my discomfiture, I became wroth, and peremptorily ordered him to my aid.

In spite of my condition I nearly became convulsed, as again and again we—Zulu and Britisher—clutched at the bird and missed it, each endeavouring in his efforts to outdo the other. But I was handicapped too heavily, for I was clothed, and those clothes, being wet, stuck to my skin like wax, while “the gentleman of colour” was nearly as naked as our forefathers are reported to have been in the Garden of Eden. Not far off, on a neighbouring knoll, was my friend, from whose throat came roars of mirth, expressive of the delight he experienced in witnessing my discomfiture, and at his feet reclined my confounded pointer, whose absence up to this

moment I had not noticed. To whistle for the dog was the action of a moment, but before she had time to arrive I had a second fall, and in coming down nearly drew the black fellow on the top of me, which I only failed in doing by being not quite adroit enough in my attempt. You will perceive that I was not the least selfish, no, not I, thus I did not wish to monopolise all the duckings to myself. Donna, however, soon settled the matter, and brought the cause of all our discomfiture to hand.

This bird and its mate appeared identical with those we are familiar with in the British Islands, and as they were both young and fat, a *sine quâ non* in this species for table use, they were found most palatable when served.

On joining my companion he informed me that he had seen a bird of "enormous proportions" a short distance off on the upland, and that it had taken wing into a grove of mimosa adjoining, where he believed it to be at the present. On cross-questioning him about this extraordinary creature, the answers I received were so vague that I felt quite puzzled as to what it could be. Was it a pauw? "No, it was too dark and too short in the leg for that bird." Was it a kooran? "No, it was three times the size of it."



SPUR-WINGED GOOSE (*Anser gambelensis*).

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Was it an ostrich? At this he waxed wroth, and inquired if I took him for a fool.

However, we went in search of the unknown, but nowhere could it be seen, and I really commenced to think that my friend was what he supposed I took him for, when a Hottentot who had joined us from the wagons called out in his gibberish, and pointed with his hand in the direction he wished us to look. "See bass, *vilge maccow*;" but it took a great deal of patient staring before we could detect what our man evidently saw.

At length we did succeed, which was rather a wonder, for the object of our search was up in a tree, and not on the ground. We both came to the conclusion that the unknown was a vulture, and thus unworthy of powder and lead, and would have passed on; but Totty got excited at our indifference, and swore some fearful Boer oaths expressive of its superiority as an article of food; so at length my chum resolved to shoot, and gave it one of the barrels. The thump that bird made when it came to the ground was sufficient to startle a nervous person, for it fell with a thud as sonorous as would be produced by the descent of a bag of potatoes.

To reach our prey was the work of a moment, and

what our surprise was, finding it nothing less than a giant goose, may easily be imagined.

I have shot pretty nearly everything, and wood-ducks among the number, but it was the first time that I had become acquainted with a wood-goose. It was a splendid specimen, forty-two inches in entire length, and must have weighed over a stone. The claws on the toes were very sharp, particularly long, and appeared to be partially retractile, without which provision it would, I believe, be unable to stand erect on a moderate-sized limb of a tree.

Chapman, who came across this noble bird in the vicinity of Lake Ngami, called it the *Anser gambensis*, and nowhere is it abundant, except in the vicinity of large rivers, such as the Zambesi, Limpopo, and their greater tributaries. As night was rapidly approaching, I returned to the marsh to wait for ducks, my friend proceeding to the wagons to superintend the *cuisine*, in which department he was well skilled.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLIMATE.

Sunsets—Glorious Colours—A Ground Pig.

POSSIBLY some people think that sunsets are identical all over the earth; indeed they are not, but are as different as is the light of our ordinary English moon to the light afforded by the same luminary in the tropics. At sea, in the vicinity of the equator, grand sunsets are known, but they are not to be compared to those that are to be seen here, when the observer looks westward toward the Kalihari Desert. The rarefaction of the atmosphere in these plateau lands doubtlessly accounts for this, in conjunction with the total absence of damp. The sun in this part of Africa descends in a mass of deepest crimson lines, which gradually give place to a colour outrivalling gold, which again loses itself in orange, to be replaced by paler

shades of yellow till the zenith is reached, where all disappear into pure cobalt blue. It would be difficult to tell where one colour commences and another terminates, but the effect is grand beyond conception, and, therefore, far beyond what language can describe.

Actual shooting we all enjoy, but how much is its pleasure enhanced by witnessing such glories of the universe surrounding the scenes of our adventures!

My watch was not so lonely, for my Zulu and dog were with me; yet, after the sun dipped, a solemnity stole over the scene, strikingly calculated to impress the inexperienced with his isolation. How often in far-distant America have I done the same as now; but, as America and the country I am in are so far separated, there is much to tell of the difference between them.

But, for all the solemnity that surrounds you, there is abundance to inform you that animal life has not yet retired to rest, for new, and often unknown, sounds constantly break the stillness.

Foremost among these is the discordant note of the Goliath heron (*Ardea goliath*), whose strong,

grating, harsh voice much more resembles that of a hyena than a bird; and about the same time the Squacco heron (*Ardeola leucoptera*) finds out that he is not dumb, and gives evidence of his discovery by making a succession of dismal, weird-like groans worthy of a "banshee." The white stork (*Ardea ciconia*) also finds a voice, which is not unmusical, but very plaintive, particularly when it is borne to the listener's ears from a far distance aloft in the heavens.

But, close at hand, from among the sedge and weeds, come to natives of Our Land the voices of three familiar friends, doubly dear when heard so far from home. These songsters are the willow, sedge, and melodious warblers. African travel has not damped their ardour, or its climate lessened the melody of their notes.

There are also gulps and croaks, and a variety of other sounds, proceeding from frogs, lizards, etc., and such like; but I have no time to trouble over them, for on swift pinions a flight of teal pass by, make one circle round, and in a moment after drop into the water with a distinct splash. This family party is not over thirty yards off, and almost as

clear to view as if it was full daylight. As soon as I raise myself to shoot the birds see me, and again take wing, but too late for four to continue with their friends, for the cruel discharge of both barrels has either killed them outright, or so disabled them that they must remain where they have fallen.

Again and again flights of the same duck arrive and are treated in a similar way. It is a shame to deal such destruction amongst them; but as an excuse for the slaughter I can only urge their excellence as food.

This teal, on account of the colour of its bill, is called the red-billed teal (*Anas erythrorhyncha*), and is the most abundant species in this part of the country, save at some periods of the year, when the willow duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*) will be found almost equally numerous; but when the vleys commence to get shallow the latter leaves for the large lagoons and water-courses to the north.

Although rapidly becoming dark, and it will soon be too much so to shoot, a flock of worthier, because larger, game is heard in the distance; and an attuned ear to the sound soon recognises the

producers of it. All who have shot wild fowl at home or in America can never forget the honk! honk! of the wild goose; and with what anxiety and increased rapidity of circulation of his blood has he not waited for this most wary of all feathered game to come within range! If you are not well concealed, and even then do but move, although it may be so far on in the dusk as almost to be black night, these suspicious birds are sure to see you, when good-bye to all your hope for a shot at the wily game that evening.

Now the knob-billed goose (*Sarkidiornis Africana*) that I hear approaching does not honk, but utters a weak, effeminate bark, such as might be supposed to come from the throat of the most diminutive pampered cur that ever disgraced a carriage or made a visit to wealthy maiden aunt unendurable. But this difference of voice does not affect this species' wariness; no, not a bit of it, they are just the same artful, tricky beasts as those that live in the Northern Hemisphere. Knowing this, I kept quiet—as still, indeed, as the proverbial mouse—and I considered my chances were A 1. At length I spied the faint outline of the desired letter V. Gradually it became more

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distinct, and the shadowy uncertainty of each bird's outline was becoming defined; in a few seconds more they would have been within range, and I was drawing my limbs together so as to be able to rise rapidly and fire, when, pheugh! the whole skein turned their heads heavenwards and went with just such rapidity as these birds alone know how to exhibit. I fired both barrels in quick succession; the shot pattered most admirably off their close plumage, but did no more, for never a goose came down.

What alarmed these geese must have been the white on my pointer, for my Zulu knew his business too well to have moved even the expression of his sooty physiognomy at such an important crisis.

In gathering my ducks, my boy had' just such an adventure as frequently occurs in South Africa and adds spice to its field sports. An eagle owl, I believe a *Strix lactea*, made a swoop at one of the teal as my lad was about to lift it, and carried it off. That bird, like the lost salmon of the fisherman, was bewailed the greater part of the road home, as it was considered by him the best of the lot. How similar are Christians to Pagans; as far

as patriotism and loyalty go in the present age, the last-mentioned, however, is the better man.

Before reaching the wagons, Donna had a brush with an *aard-vark* (ground pig), which she was unable to hold, so it escaped to its burrow. To have got it out would have taken the whole of my party the best portion of a day, so I left my resolute and industrious pointer out of sight in the bowels of the earth, scratching and giving tongue with as much assiduity as if she had just commenced a day's work instead of having concluded a most arduous one.

CHAPTER IX.

SWEET HOME.

The Camp—Nature's Favourites—Trekking.

THERE'S no place like home, whether it be in a mansion, a hovel, or a wagon. You good folks who live in civilisation, surrounded by every comfort, will scarcely believe me when I say that, I have never enjoyed more perfect happiness and contentment than when I have been trekking about the desert as my inclinations dictated, and knew no other shelter than my good wagon afforded.

Come, reader, and take a look at my camp from the outside, unknown to my chum; for most assuredly, if he thought he was being observed, he would crawl into his shell, and would not be half as nice and natural as he is now. In him is to be found an example of how an assumption of manners depreciates instead of improves the individuality of nature.

The ground selected for the camp is high, and therefore dry ; it is surrounded by a few scattered *camil-dorn* trees from twenty-five to thirty feet high, which not only supply my people with wood, but also form convenient larders for hanging our game in. Moreover, they add picturesqueness to the scene ; and I am a great advocate for pleasing the eye, whether it be in the choice of a sweetheart, a horse, a dog, or even a gun. I suppose our City fathers are most gratified by the delights of the table or the wine-cup, and the exquisite with perfumes and the knowledge that he is well dressed, but give me the sight of a bonnie lass tripping over the heather, or balancing herself on stepping-stones that traverse the bed of a murmuring burn, the sides of which are shut in with feathery, graceful birches, or drooping, dipping, ever-moving elm-boughs.

But, the reader may say, Africa is surely not the place to gratify such a pleasure ! But it is ; for in parts of it there are glades and valleys quite as attractive as any to be seen at home ; but, in place of the blue-eyed, golden-haired, rose-tinted cheeked lassie, you must substitute the graceful steinbok, the suspicious duiker, or the elegant yet

powerful koodoo, all Nature's favourites, for she has, with lavish hand indeed, endowed them with such attractive gifts, that destitute indeed of soul must be the man who cannot feel enthralled by gazing on their perfections.

Look into the camp, though. Observe the two snow-white tilted wagons drawn up side by side, about twelve feet apart, the intervening space covered with a new duck sail. This is our *sanctum sanctorum*, and sacred from the intrusion of any but our body servants or invited guests. Note it at the present time, and you will observe in it a portable table covered with a cloth that shames in cleanliness many to be found in European restaurants, while at each end stands a folding chair as luxurious to rest in as ever decorated drawing-room.

Twenty yards behind the wagons burns a bright, clear fire, around which three or four natives are attending to the cooking; while between them, wherever space will permit, are assembled dogs of high and low degree, from the pure-bred English greyhound to the Kaffir cur. Note the interest these animals take in each pot, and with what thorough decorum they conduct themselves.

To leeward, some twenty paces off, is another fire, twice the size of the cooks'; around it are assembled *voorlopers*, horse-boys, and all the strangers and hangers-on that have been picked up on the way. They are a queer heterogeneous mob, and represent half the tribes of South Africa. How jolly they are, how their faces beam with good nature, and how their eyes sparkle in anticipation of their coming feast! Talk about change of facial expression! No English actor that ever was born could rival these men, and their pantomimic action is so inimitable that, even without a knowledge of their language, the observer can almost understand every scene or action they are describing.

If it, the subject of their conversation, be war or the chase, how excited they become; if love and intrigue, how honeyed, suave, and plausible they appear!

Politics these people discuss with all the energies of their nature; the last scandal they repeat with all the gusto of the oldest club *roué*. Yet they never quarrel, because they never offend natural delicacy, knowing how far they can go, and never overstepping that bound. If these people were

colonial natives, or picked up in the vicinity of the mission stations, could so much be said of them? No! So much for our boasted civilisation and teaching.

It would require the brush of a Rembrandt to render justice to such a scene as this camp-fire presents, and the scene is quite worthy of the pencil of that Great Master.

From the near shadows the outlines of our nags are seen, clothed, it is true; still a judge of horse-flesh can see at a glance how many good points they possess. With what contentment they thrust their muzzles to the bottom of their nose-bags, so as not to lose a grain of their *mealies*; but, at the same time, their eyes and ears are all intent on what is passing around them.

In the distance, and almost out of sight, because they are so far off, in a double row, stand or lie the patient yet obstinate bullocks. They are pretty beasts to look at, quite as much so as any you will see at home; indeed, from the excessive largeness and intelligence of their eyes, I think that they are often more attractive. Their life is not always an easy one, and their punishment is often too severe;

which latter is much to be regretted, for how could the white man travel without them in this country? But whacking is no unusual return for good service.

It only remains for me to now give the reader a glimpse into my wagon. On my baggage will be found a comfortable bed, covered with a scarlet blanket for quilt and a couple of large air pillows for feather ones. On each side are arm-racks, in which are hung several rifles and shot-guns, while around the sides are innumerable bags, in which everything is to be found, from a tooth-brush to a "hold-all," or from a needle to a cookery book.

I have said so much on what is not actual shooting in order that the reader may the better understand the surroundings when we come into the country of larger game. So off to bed, to be up in the morning early.

Before sun-up the oxen were in the yoke, for three long treks were before us, with only one probable watering-place. The road was good but heavy, and the air cool and invigorating, so we stepped merrily along.

As my chum was a late sleeper when nothing particular was on the *tapis*, my wagon took the

lead, and from its box, on which I was seated, a fine view of the distant country was obtainable.

Guinea fowl were numerous; at every turn of the track three or four, sometimes half-a-dozen, of these swift runners took the road in front of us, and only left it when inclination suited them to do so.

Duiker and steinbok every few hundred yards hopped out of some bush, took a long, startled stare, and off they went to parts unknown, while aloft in the air incessantly passed little parties of two or three of the swift-winged and plaintive-voiced double-banded or variegated sand grouse.

I was in contemplation of all these charming scenes, and thinking what a free and independent life I was leading, when my driver came to my seat, and, taking the vacant place at my side, exclaimed, "Look der, Bass! Look der, *spring-boken*"; and there indeed are the spring-buck, not in thousands as I expect to see them, but in parties of seven or eight. They were not over three or four hundred yards off, consequently within rifle range, so I got out my binocular (the most useful of all the instruments, and, at the same time, the one most conducive to pleasure, that the traveller in these parts can

possess) and for long watched their various graceful attitudes and antics.

As we have meat sufficient and to spare, I forbid shooting (two of our people being excellent game shots, particularly my Hottentot driver), as I am anxious to reach the expected water, for upon its abundance depends our remaining by it a few hours or a day, and shooting invariably entails stoppages.

CHAPTER X.

ENJOYMENT.

The Vley—Ostriches—Old Bull.

UNTIL we get to the *outspan*, I will say a few words about the *spring-bok* (*Gazella euchore*), for the reason that for one that is familiar with them at home, there are thousands that are not.

This beautiful and most graceful animal breeds in the Kalihari Desert, and I am inclined to believe that none which enter the colony ever return from it. They are about the size of our fallow deer, but, from possessing greater length of limb, appear to stand higher. Their colour on the back, flanks, and a portion of the head, is the brightest fawn; elsewhere they are snow-white. Their heads are beautifully long and tapering, and they are crowned with the most perfect lyre-shaped horns, deeply corrugated for several inches from the base, where

they become smooth and terminate in the finest points. They are essentially grass feeders, and require but little water. By choice they prefer level plains of short grass, but when the migratory flocks come on them, they unhesitatingly pass through wide extents of *bush-veldt*. To the natives their appearance is an inestimable boon, but to the farmers they are a plague as much to be dreaded as locusts, for not only do they consume all the growing crops, but will eat every blade of grass off the flats, so that not a particle is left to support cattle or sheep.

The expected vley of water at last was reached; in it there was "water galore," and hovering over and about it were thousands of Namaqua sand grouse.

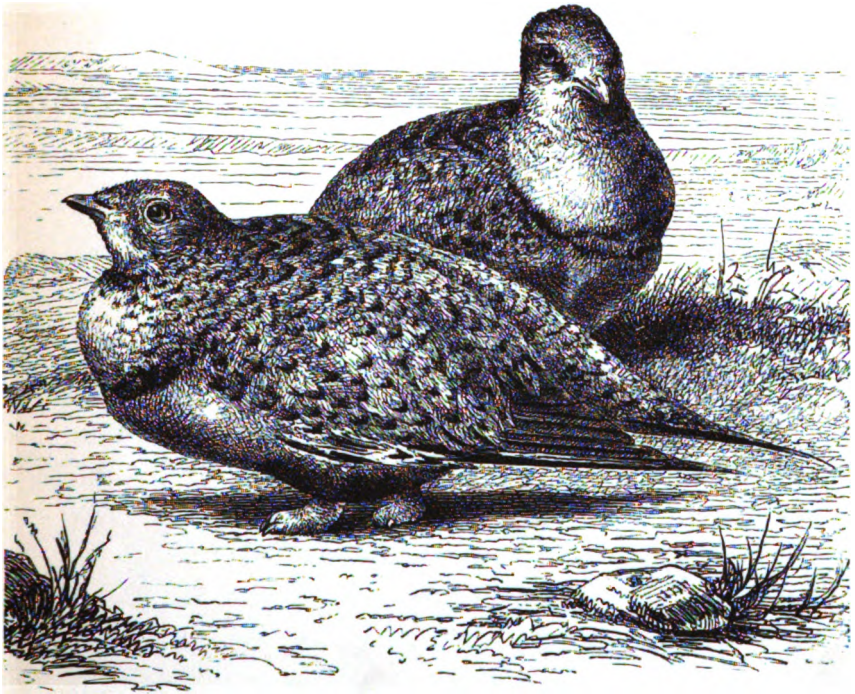
While the cattle were being taken out of the yoke, I got out my shot-gun, and being joined by my chum, we proceeded to the lower end of the vley, to procure some of these beauties. Tough as they are to our teeth, they are excellent for native consumption, for they give their jaws a lot of exercise, and thus save better food.

My friend took one side of the pool and I the other, and as but little shelter was required

to hide our presence, the reports of our guns soon awoke the latent echoes. The velocity of this sand grouse's flight is something remarkable, for at, say, forty yards, to make certain of killing, in cross shots I have to hold at least two feet in front of them. Moreover, they carry away lots of shot, if a vital part be not struck; and even those that are wing-tipped appear to be able to sustain themselves in their flight twice the distance of any other fowl I know of.

A strange thing I note about this little beauty is that it often makes no attempt to descend to drink till it is directly over the water, into which it sweeps* from an altitude of fifty yards with the velocity of an arrow—not on to the land, but actually into the liquid—whence it swims ashore with as much *nonchalance* as if it was strictly aquatic in habits. This is the more remarkable, as its legs are feathered to the feet, and the latter are peculiarly small. As a matter of course, it cannot stand a protracted bath of this kind, but I am convinced that I observed several swim ten or even twelve yards.

This species (*Pteroclorus Namaqua*) feeds upon



NAMAQUA SAND GROUSE (*Pteroclorus Namaqua*).

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small bulbs, berries, and grass seeds ; never, I think, upon insects.

Its colour is about that of the woodcock, but paler and brighter. The lower mandible is white, the upper blue, the eye a pale yellow, with a dark-brown iris.

Let not the trout or salmon fisherman visiting this land neglect to procure a skin or two of this species, for from its hackles and wing can be tied the deadliest summer fly for the former, whilst it is a most valuable addition to those destined to allure the prey of the latter.

Some Bakalihari, who looked as if they had been upon very short commons indeed, although they had just had their immediate wants satisfied by our folks, as a natural result became communicative, and informed my friend that, as they crossed from their *kraal*, they had seen ostriches a few miles to the westward. This was big enough game in all conscience to excite his passion for the slaughter of something large, so "the gray," *alias* "the old moke" (one of the best hunting horses a man ever laid a leg over, and purchased by me for a song out of a trap at the diamond fields), was ordered to be saddled

and brought up. My chum was soon ready for the chase, and as he got into the saddle he repeated Pringle's lines, with every word of whose writings he was familiar :—

The fleet-footed ostrich over the waste
Speeds like a horseman who travels in haste,
Hieing away to the home of her rest,
Where she and her mate have scooped their nest,
Far hid from the pitiless plunderer's view,
In the pathless depths of the parched Karroo.

So, when he was gone sufficiently long to have placed a couple of miles between us, I sent for my pet mount. Well, he was a beauty. I picked him up in Griqua Land West, also out of a trap, when from being so low in flesh you could have hung your hat on his hips. But, if you are a judge, when can you see the points of a horse better than then? He had the character of being a buck-jumper, but I did not mind that, so I paid my money and felt happy. By this time rest and plenty of food had worked wonders, and, with the exception of the second day I rode him, we had no differences of opinion. This submission was due to a firm seat, and more especially to sensitive hands backed up by common judgment,

which taught me not to pull my horse's mouth about as if I was dragging on the tiller-lines of a family boat.

When Nemo (for so I called him) came up to be saddled, he looked fit to go for a man's life. He once *had* to go for mine ; but time enough for that.

The pack, which numbered about twenty, were ordered to be released, the pointer and an old phlegmatic, half-mastiff, half-bull dog among the number. There was to be no partiality, favour or affection shown that day, so no broken, anxious, pining hearts were to be left behind in sorrow and despair.

There was joy in that crowd, I can assure you, and dear "old bull" showed the fulness of his honest, manly, brave heart by sitting on his rump, looking me full in the face and giving utterance to the most doleful, yet deep and sonorous, bow-wows that ever emanated from a chest of similar girthage.

Yes, I was going to give the children a complete outing ; and, as they had all at various times hunted for my pleasure, on this occasion I was going to hunt for theirs.

I can hear the cynic ask, "What could a big

porpoise of a brute such as you are describing as 'old bull,' do among a lot of full or half-bred greyhounds?" I will answer, enjoy himself first; secondly, make himself useful; since he was never thrown out of the hunt if the others were a mile ahead, for straight on their spoor he would be found toiling, occasionally, it is true, perchance, lying down for a momentary rest, but, for all that, his mellow voice never ceased.

If, by chance, the greyhounds had over-run their game and were hopping up and down like india-rubber balls in every patch of bush or long grass in the vicinity to try and regain a sight of it, after a time—it might be a long time—"old bull" would come up, clap his nose to the lost scent, give two or three of his stentorian howls, to bring his companions about him, the weakest of whom he would possibly nearly knock off their legs with repeated wallops of his cudgel of a tail, and in a few minutes after all were assembled around him, the buck would be turned out of his temporary shelter, and probably having to face the open, got pulled down before going far.

But before getting into the saddle, and while my

boy is bringing my Express rifle, I will tell you an act of prowess of this ancient Roman, for it shows what true courage he possessed, and how little display he made in exercising it.

Five of the slowest, but probably the most powerful of my pack were out with me and "old bull." A *brunt-sick* spring-buck was started, and went off at a rattling pace for an animal in bad health. After about three miles of as fast going in the open as I ever wish to have when handicapped with a double-barrelled rifle, the buck gained a large piece of loose brush a good three hundred yards in front of his pursuers. With their usual ardour they dashed into the cover, and I, close up, did the same; but all of a sudden I lost sight of the hounds, and for some time could see nothing of them, so I pulled up Nemo to breathe him and to take observations. In the distance, quite half a mile off, I could hear the deep, sonorous voice of honest "old bull" bringing up the tail of the hunt. Scarcely understanding why I was deserted by the dogs, unless they had killed, I cast about in search of them. Soon afterwards I was joined by first one and then another, till all were with me but one,

a cross between a German boarhound and greyhound, a well-plucked beast, sulky and obstinate to a degree, but possessed of this selfish peculiarity, that he would never leave game he had killed till he had made a heavy meal off it.

This more thoroughly convinced me that a kill had been made, so I cast about to find the carcase. While doing so I noticed that when I headed in a certain direction my attendants showed a manifest dislike to following me ; but, as the missing dog bullied all the others, and would brook none to feed alongside of him, I attributed their conduct to fear of punishment from him.

Again I turned my horse to go further up to windward, when I found the truant standing fixed and rigid, his lips curled up to show all his teeth, and a demoniacal expression about him that told plainly as words could express it, " There is an enemy in front of me ; I would fain attack, but I fear I am not quite equal to the job."

I slowly advanced, the courageous dog preceding me, and in a few steps the mystery was unravelled, for in front of me were two hyenas, tearing at the

carcase of my buck. They were of the big spotted species, and, therefore, larger and heavier than any mastiff. Of course I could easily have shot them, but I thought, I'll wait for "old bull," who I could hear was not now far astern.

In the meantime the plunderers had seen me, and the smaller of them, thinking that prudence was better than valour, stole off. But no such intention seemed to actuate the larger, for, although he glowered at me, he continued to tear off large portions of flesh and swallow them without the slightest attempt at mastication.

Had I advanced upon this brute he, doubtless, would have given way; but that was not my game, as I have previously said. With a rush that was distinctly audible from the breaking off and parting of the dry brush and grass, up came "old bull," panting like a high-pressure engine. With a shout I cheered him on, but even that he did not require. In his passage by me the big hound joined him. In an instant after, the last-mentioned made a dash at the thief, which as rapidly turned to ward off the attack, but this move was the hyena's death-warrant,

for in an instant "old bull" had him by the throat, which grip he never released till the united pack had worried the last particle of life out of the enemy's carcase.

CHAPTER XI.

A GALLOP.

A Special Favourite—Meer-kats—Sunset.

“STAND! stand! darling, stand!” I exclaimed, as I gathered the reins together on Nemo’s withers previously to putting my foot in the stirrup, for the pet was so anxious to be off that his anxiety to start could scarcely be restrained. An observer would, on such an occasion, have thought my good horse was full of vice; for he would glance backwards with his large, full eyes, lay his small, velvety ears down upon his neck, and expand his nostrils to the fullest extent, while his off fore-leg would paw the ground as if despising the earth he stood upon; but how wrong would he be to judge so by these petty demonstrations, for, had I just dismounted and turned the reins over the horse’s head, there he would remain almost stationary, except when the desire to nibble at an

attractive bunch of grass, or sweet-leaved bush, might cause him to advance a few paces.

This acquirement (remaining where left) is of the greatest importance in a hunting horse, and seems to be intuitively learned by an African one.

The pack at this moment are clamorous and all excitement to start, but when I swing myself into the saddle the climax is reached, and each and all, giving vent to their feelings in many-toned yelps, go off at racing pace.

Taking just sufficient pull upon Nemo's mouth to steady his pace and keep his stride well within his control, we settle down to work and play our respective parts in a business-like manner. Now I place my foot home in the stirrup, employing no other pressure upon its bar than is necessary to know that I feel it; not so gently with my knees, for with them I take a grip that, if it does not crack my mount's ribs, tells him that I am so hard and fast to the pigskin that it will take something more than usual to unship me. But, to ease both horse and man, from my knees I raise myself so as to reduce the weight on the cantle of my saddle and more evenly distribute it, at the same time advancing

my head and shoulders to the front, the better to obtain the balance I desire.

Thus I ride when the pace is sharp and the ground is rough. It may be said that I am not asked to teach riding ; but there are such a lot of duffers in this world who think they can ride, that I cannot help stepping out of my province to give them a lesson. Colonel Dodge, of the United States service, deprecates English horsemen. For my own part, I think he is right, and never do you see this more fully proved than when you note one of our countrymen for the first time outside of a foreign horse in an unknown land.

On a well-bred and well-broken horse to ride with hounds in Leicestershire is the easiest matter in the world, provided the equestrian retains his head ; to ride well in our cramped counties with the foremost flight is a more difficult thing to do ; but to take an untried horse and make the most out of him over a South African country requires the rider to be a man of iron nerves, great judgment, excellent hands, and a seat very much composed of shoemaker's wax.

Our colonists, in the country I am writing of,

can do this, so there remains little in the shape of horsemanship for them to learn, save, let me remember before coming to a decision, riding on a high-stepper in Rotten Row, with your trousers strapped down so tight as to take the breath out of your mouth, while your boots armed with spurs, brilliant in their polish, project so far from the heels in which they are set as to give the impression that the wearer is the most bloodthirsty of men. To impart this impression to beholders is very important.

As Nemo and I have now got over a mile or so of ground by fair, honest, good galloping, and we are about getting into a bit of country considerably undermined with *meer-kat* holes, I take a pull upon his head so as to slacken the pace and keep his legs ready for emergencies, since they are awkward things for a horse to put his foot in, for, although not quite as deep as a draw-well, they are quite as perpendicular as far as they go.

But the name *meer-kat* is as unknown, doubtless, to stay-at-home Englishmen as the animal is itself. I will attempt to describe it. It is about the size of a pole-cat ferret, of a bright red colour, and gifted with a very long, squirrel-like tail. In

the evenings and mornings it is to be found out of doors, when, on being alarmed, it sits upright at the entrance to its burrow ; so upright, indeed, that it appears difficult to imagine where the kink can come in its caudal appendage so as to allow it to be held perpendicular. Like the squirrel, it uses its fore-paws as hands, which, when not employed in transferring food to its mouth, it crosses in front of its chest with an air of devotion.

Meer-kats live together in communities, and I should not doubt they lead a very happy life, but that, from such close association, they interfere with each other's domestic affairs. When secreted behind an ant-hill with my binocular, I have noticed this. I believe that most of their troubles originate from the lady wives showing preference to neighbours. It is not to be supposed that these beasts can have travelled to England to learn such delinquencies, but the lady *meer-kats* seem to pay much more attention to their visitors than they do to their lords and masters.

In the burrows of the *meer-kat* the puff adder and pearl-spotted owl always appear to find a shelter. It is open to question whether their visits to these burrows are not dictated by selfish motives. A

mature *meer-kat* is not bad to eat, I can attest; a young one, therefore, is probably a delicacy.

The *meer-kat* on this Continent plays exactly the same part that the prairie-dog does in America, but in form and appearance they have this difference:—the latter is puffy and phlegmatic, the former long and slim. This formation is doubtlessly attained in Africa from their being total abstainers—their burrows being often found far from water—thus they become attenuated like Blue Ribbon martyrs, in contradistinction to those who go to bed mellow.

Let me describe the country we have got to. It is composed of spurs of land, two or three hundred yards apart, the summits of which are covered with bush, the greater portion of it being thorny; not after the manner of our home-bred wild roses and brambles, for the thorns here will, if chance be offered, run themselves as far into you as the blade of a pocket-knife could reach. Among these thorns are occasionally to be found mimosa trees, but they are far and wide apart; thus a good view, with few interruptions, is generally to be obtained.

With Nemo well in hand I traversed several of these dips and valleys without finding the game we

desired, although at every few hundred yards bush kooran (Ruppell's bustard—*Otis Ruppelli*) would be flushed; but at length, in turning a corner, up jumped a *spring-bok* in full sight of my pack, and with nearly one hundred and fifty yards law.

Riding with well-bred fox-hounds, when they are in view of game, the pace is generally very stiff; but riding with greyhounds the pace is unquestionably a little more so, so I let my gallant little horse go, and he proved himself capable of carrying thirteen stone (over a country not the easiest in the world) pretty close to the fag end of the hunt.

I could not attempt to describe where each particular dog was situated, as Virgil does in the pulling down of Actæon; but this I can tell, that sleek, bonnie, pretty little Connie Gilchrist had the lead, and just behind her followed a yellow-haired, fat Jezebel, whom no judge at a dog-show would award the quality of pace to. The hunted animal doubled and doubled again; but all such efforts were fruitless, and each turn brought up the rest of the pack, when dear old "Arrack" (he who assisted to slay the spotted hyena) got within reach of the game, by running cunning, seized the

spring-bok by the thigh and tumbled him over in his tracks.

There was a "hew bellew" now among my beasts ; such a worrying and tearing as never was seen took place, and I thought no man ever possessed such a swift and unapproachable pack of hounds, until I inspected the quarry, and then, to my disgust, I discovered that it was a victim of *brunt* sickness, and therefore far from up to its best running form. Yet do not let the reader imagine for a moment that the run was completed in a few hundred yards, for that would be a mistake ; three miles at least were traversed before the buck was brought to earth, and if it had not been weakened by disease, it is quite possible, with such a start as it obtained, it would have shown me and mine a clean pair of heels.

We were not finished with that afternoon's work, for it was too early in the day to go home, and tell the dogs that they had had their outing ; so I rode through some more brush, and soon had another *spring-bok* afoot ; it was rapidly pulled down, and, like its predecessor, suffered from *brunt* sickness.

The appearance of this disease I can only describe, the origin I attribute it to is only hypothesis.

On the back or saddle of the victim is a large space of scab; the Boers say it originates from the beast being bitten by some noxious fly, after which it licks the wound, and upon the saliva the blue fly and common house-fly of the country alight, and deposit their ova. From the appearance of the sore, I think this most probably the cause of the disease.

As the few clouds that exist are now in the west, and the sun, their king, is among them, improving some for their dull sombreness, or imparting to his favourites some of his resplendent colours, I know that night is at hand, and that little time is to be lost if I wish to reach the wagons before darkness descends; so, with a shout to summon my companions, and a cheer to encourage my good nag to further exertions, we soon cover the intervening distance with the exception of a few hundred yards, where I witness one of those scenes that occur now and then to give zest to a hunter's life. It was the assemblage of all my servants and their staff in the

immediate vicinity of an earth, endeavouring to draw out an *aard-vark* which they had discovered secreted in a hole big enough for a Newfoundland dog to act in as fox-terrier.

CHAPTER XII.

NIGHT.

Lost—Outwitted—A Trap.

AN *aard-vark* is not a “sonsie” animal, nor is it a pretty one, and, as it appears, it is not a desirable one to try to capture; still it is good food in the eyes of the natives, so my followers had made the attempt to dig this one out. And dig they did, for soon they made an excavation big enough for cellars to an ordinary cottage, if not for a house. I arrived at the critical moment when they had succeeded in getting a *rheim* round one of the unfortunate’s hind legs, which my Zulu, two *voorlopers* and several outsiders were hanging to; but, in spite of this immense amount of human energy, I expect they would have been worsted (for these creatures dig into the soil as fast as a mole), if it had not been for that irrepressible pointer and “old bull” making a dash into the cavity, where each obtained a hold upon the poor beast’s flanks, which

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incommoded it so much that it resolved to fight its battle above ground.

In carrying out this resolution it gave up its hold to the burrow, so came out all of a heap; and so unexpectedly was this done, that every one of the darkies pulling upon the *treck-tow*, with several of the dogs that were in close vicinity to them, fell topsy-turvy into such an unravellable heap that it was hard to tell which was nigger and which was dog.

The prey, however, was secured, and the prospect of a good feed upon what they consider the most succulent of food prevented the coloured gentry complaining or possibly regretting their barked shins or bruised crania.

That pointer and "old bull" were on this occasion perfect Parnellites in swaying the balance of power; but the poor dumb animals did it from uninterested motives—who can say the same of the other animals alluded to?

The poor *aard-vark* had scarcely been knocked on the head and skinned when one of my boys informed me that several "pauw" (bustards) had alighted on the adjoining flat. Desirous as I was of securing

some of this noble game, I deferred my campaign against them till the morrow. The illustration will perhaps convey to the reader some of the enthusiasm I felt.

If there is one thing more than another that annoys me, it is being kept waiting for my dinner ; yet it always appears to me to be so abominably selfish to sit down and feed alone, that I kept postponing my meal till patience ceased to be a virtue. That evening, if simply for the purpose of passing the time, I had paid more than usual attention to the cooking, and, so I flattered myself, not without producing good results. Therefore not having my friend's company was the more to be regretted.

As the sun had been down considerably more than an hour, and there was no appearance of the absent one, I naturally began to feel uneasy, and conjured up in my mind the possibility of all kinds of accidents having occurred to him.

For some years lions had disappeared from this vicinity, thus I had nothing to dread from the possibility of the king of beasts having attacked my chum. Again, he was so skilled in the use of firearms that there was scarcely a chance of his

disabling himself by an accidental explosion ; but he was unquestionably a bad horseman, and spills upon the African veldt are of every-day occurrence ; and, although rarely serious injury results from them, a man might have his arm or collar-bone broken. To this latter possibility, therefore, I was about to attribute his lengthened absence, when a fresh reason for his failure to return rose in my mind, viz., it was just possible—nay, more than that, probable—that he had lost his way.

Of all the hunting companions I have ever had—and they have been numerous enough—I never was associated with one who had a worse idea of direction. It has puzzled me times beyond count how any man could be so stupid in this respect ; in fact, it has not unfrequently almost made me lose my temper to see with what persistency he would adopt the wrong course, and, worse still, stick to it, in spite of all argument or persuasion.

Now, my friend was an educated man—even more, a gentleman who had distinguished himself at his university ; so better things might have been expected from him. But I have invariably remarked that, the higher the type of a man in

breeding and educational acquirements, the more certain he is to be an adept at wandering when left to his own resources. The lowest organisations to be found in the human family, such as the Digger Indian and the Bushman, never get lost; however similar the landscape they traverse may be, they will retrace their steps to their starting-place without hesitation or doubt.

For the better cleanliness of the camp, I had insisted upon all the offal and *débris* being transported to a hollow, about a hundred and fifty yards from the wagons. This refuse had not only attracted my own dogs, but a number of jackals, and between them they made such an incessant row that I ordered my canines to be tied up. This being accomplished, I proceeded to the scene of the late disturbance with four traps, hoping by this means to secure a few skins, as those of the jackal make the best karosses. In this work my Zulu boy accompanied me, and we had just finished placing the gins in such positions as appeared most probable to bring success, when the sharp "patter patter" of a horse's feet was heard approaching. A few seconds sufficed to take me into the camp, and in a moment or two afterwards

the "old moke," with heaving flanks, sweat-stained hide, and startled eyes, entered it. It was evident to an observer that his pace had been fast, and that he had not been particular in selecting his path, for the saddle-flaps were deeply scratched, the stirrup-leathers and irons gone, all denoting a hasty flight. This was sufficient enough evidence, in all conscience, that something had gone wrong; therefore, without losing a moment's time, I organised a party to go in pursuit of my friend, having first provided them with an abundant supply of blank ammunition, so as to keep up a fusillade that would attract the attention of my missing friend, and thus cause him to direct his steps to his rescuers.

My people had hardly got beyond a few hundred yards from the camp when there arose on the night air a hullabaloo that told as plainly as possible that a dog had got caught in one of the traps. On inspection I found Master Arrack missing, an empty collar indicating where he ought to be.

Now, Arrack, with all his peculiarities of bad temper and resistance to control, was, on account of his pluck, unquestionably my favourite of all the pack. So I summoned "Cookey," that great, fat,

greasy beast whom I have previously described, ordered him to fetch the wagon lantern, and, with him, proceeded to release the captive. At the best of times Arrack was not an easy beast to manage, but with this attachment to his leg he certainly did look a fiend incarnate. Master "Cookey," under the pretence of assisting me to release the dog, danced about all over the place, without being of any service whatever. At length, however, I secured the dog's head between my legs, imprecating in no very measured terms this swarthy son of Ham for not pressing down the springs to enable the jaws of the trap to be opened, when, to my amazement—I may almost say amusement—the unfortunate darkie thrust his left foot into another trap, whose existence I had temporarily forgotten, and commenced forthwith to bellow with all the powers he possessed, making, between him and Arrack, a pandemonium easier to be imagined than described. This I will say, that, under circumstances which were exactly similar, the poor dog behaved very much better than did the man. Fortunately I succeeded in placing my foot upon the spring of the trap, and so effected the release of the former, who acknowledged my kindness

by a thankful look and a grateful wag of his tail, but without a vocal expression of the pain he had suffered. Not so with the black man, who not only sang out as if he were being murdered while I was disengaging the trap from him, but kept up the same music the whole way to the wagons, and for some time after our arrival at them.

Soon after my companion came in, looking none the worse for his misadventure. As his taciturnity was proverbial until he had eaten, I deferred questioning him upon the cause of his protracted absence until he had satisfied his hunger. His narrative was as follows:—"About three or four miles from here I almost rode on the top of an ostrich; in fact, it jumped up so close before me that I felt assured the horse had trodden on it. In this belief I became more and more confirmed from it appearing impossible for the bird to do more than keep in front of me. I pushed the gray, and every moment expected to be able to knock my quarry on the head, but somehow or other, at the very moment I expected to do so, the bird seemed to be gifted with a fresh spasm of vitality. This went on

for several minutes, so, naturally, I became impatient for the termination, so would have jumped off and used my rifle, but the bush was thick, and I was afraid of losing sight of the game for an instant.

“ Thus we doubled backwards and forwards, to and fro, till at length I began to believe that I was being humbugged, so I clapped my spurs into the ‘old moke’ to make a final dash, when the brute put his foot in a hole and sent me spinning over his head. I wasn’t hurt, but considerably shaken, and for some minutes I remained in a sitting posture, looking at my horse, who seemed to be actuated with the same feelings, for he stood still looking at me. But the trance was broken immediately I rose and advanced to capture him, as then he wheeled upon his heels, and, with a neigh, no doubt of satisfaction at having got quit of me, started for home as fast as his legs would take him. I felt so disgusted at the whole performance—loss of ostrich and loss of horse—that I almost felt like taking a slap at the latter with my rifle as he disappeared through the bush and bade me good-bye. As long as it was light I was able to follow my

beast's spoor; when it got dark, I made out in the heavens the reflection of the blaze from the wagon fires, and was steadily making for it when I came across the people you sent after me."

CHAPTER XIII.

AN UNFORTUNATE.

The Shadow Bird—Snake-bitten—Sudden Death.

GENTLE reader, you don't know my friend; he is wondrously quiet, even bashful, particularly when ladies are present. Still, he possesses a quiet fund of dry humour, which, when he chooses to let loose, and that is very seldom, is immensely entertaining. Moreover, he was a gentleman that never liked to be beaten at anything he undertook, but to be sold or humbugged was, to him, one of the bitterest pills he could be asked to swallow.

Now, he had been sold by this ostrich, and when he learnt that such was the case, he was wroth, said little, but looked fierce.

The explanation is this. An ostrich acts exactly as does a wild duck or peewit when surprised upon its nest—it feigns lameness, pretends to be injured, and consequently unable to escape from the disturber,

all or either of these assumptions being for the purpose of wiling the uninitiated away from its nest. My chum well knew all these tricks of our home birds, but never for a moment supposed that African, and therefore uneducated ones were up to the same artifices; so he had been led on step by step till a safe distance had been placed between him and the object of the quarry's solicitude.

That night we sat up long and late, not from desire, but from circumstances over which we had no control. First, some of the oxen broke loose and went off on end, scouring over the veldt as if the "old gentleman" himself was at their heels, and such good use did they make of their legs that the small hours had arrived before they were brought back.

Soon after this *contretemps* a jackal was caught in one of the traps, which caused all his companions to unanimously deplore the misfortune in their most doleful notes, and this, as a matter of course, started all the dogs howling, which, in spite of forcible language and threats of whip, they refused to desist from. So there was nothing for it but to kill the captive, lift the traps, and untie our pack.

This last step did not lessen their confounded

rancorousness, only the scene of it was changed from the vicinity of the wagons to the offal hole a hundred and fifty yards off.

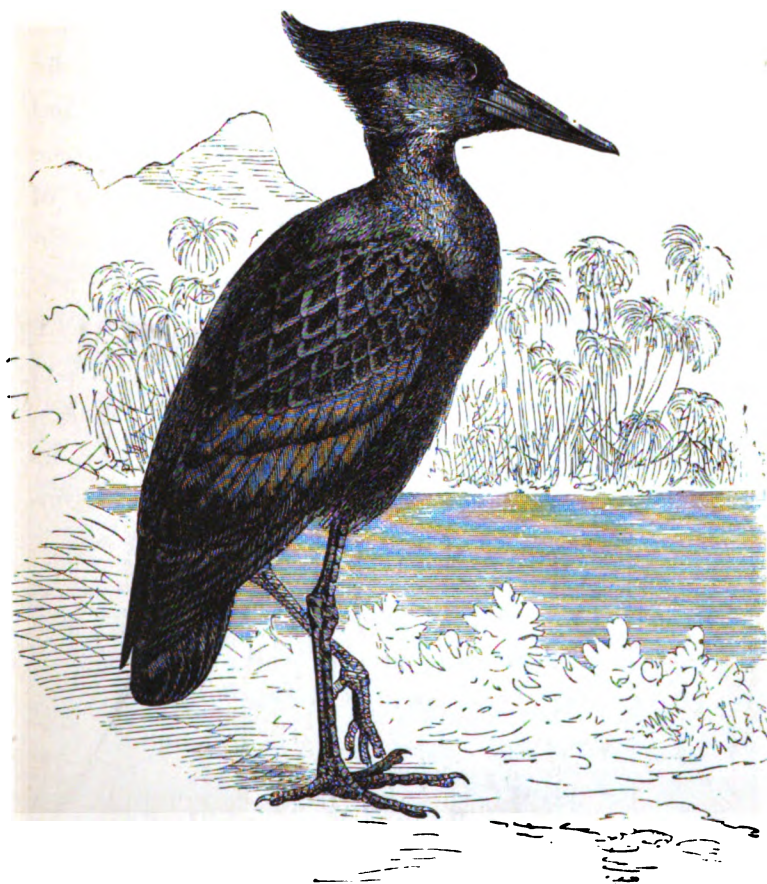
The non-enthusiastic sportsman would doubtlessly object to all these disturbances, but they are the disagreeables that have to be accepted with the pleasures. There is no such thing as perfect happiness. If there was, I fear it would be a very namby-pamby affair.

But in the intervals between the scrimmages of the dogs and jackals, other and more pleasing sounds can be heard, viz., the "bocking" of the spring-buck, the queer, half-timid, half-fierce call of the ostrich, and the shrill whistling note of the quagga. This last is a satisfactory noise to the hunter's ears, for as sure as you find this fleet and graceful animal in numbers, so sure are you to find their most devoted and assiduous attendant, the lion.

But a shadow at times flits by, and its direction is to the adjoining water. The experienced know what it is, but the uninitiated would imagine it to be an immense owl. This is the hammer-head or shadow bird (*Scopus umbretta*), a queer, weird-like creature, which, if found in Scotland or Ireland,

would be ever associated with ghosts and hobgoblins. Its plumage is a dark funereal brown, which, in some lights, shows metallic tints; even the quills are black, while its eyes are dark brown, and its bill the colour of the blackest ebony. Its voice is very human, and reminds the listener of that of a querulous, aged invalid. For hours it will remain almost motionless, with an attitude strongly indicative of suffering from oppressive grief; then a reaction seems to seize the creature, and with it a determination to be jolly under adverse circumstances, when it will rush from its resting-place to its nearest neighbour or neighbours, and all will commence a dance as ludicrous and boisterous as it is possible to imagine. Many of the cranes have the same proclivity, and their attitudes are often very laughable, but their performances are not a patch upon those of this bird.

My chum, who is a Scotchman, and had imbibed several of the superstitions of his countrymen, when he first heard the voice of the shadow bird, on learning what caused it, remarked (*sotto voce*) that "it must be neither canny nor earthly to make such a queer noise."



THE HAMMER-HEAD, OR SHADOW BIRD (*Scopus umbretta*).

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Its nest is a curiosity, for it would be a load for an ordinary wagon ; moreover, it is roofed over, and so firmly are the sticks placed that they would support with ease the weight of a man.

Further, this bird seems to be an unsatiable collector of curiosities, for around its domicile will be found every small article that comes under its notice, such as buttons, nails, fragments of cloth, and even sardine boxes, and tins that have contained coffee or preserved milk.

Its habitat is South Africa and Madagascar, beyond these it has never been found ; which being the case, if for no other reason, it is worthy of the notice of the naturalist.

It is quite possible to have an excess of tobacco, and it is equally possible to have too little sleep, so at length I turned in, determined not to be disturbed ; but Somnus would not come to my aid, and it is scarcely surprising that he did not, for what between my friend's grumbling, the servants' snoring, and the dogs' barking, a perfect pandemonium reigned outside ; but the whole was brought to a climax by one of the dogs returning from the feasting-place to the wagon, yelling with the full

power of his voice, and in such notes of anguish that, in spite of my resolution, I was compelled to come from under the blankets and learn the cause of his discomfiture. The victim was a greyhound that I had not mentioned before, for he was unworthy of notice; but, now that he has forced himself upon our attention, I am obliged to say something of him. What ailed the brute I could not make out, for his conduct was so strange and unaccountable that I had never seen the like before. It could not be hydrophobia of a new type, for canine madness is almost unknown in this part of the world. But what could it be? The beast rushed about as if blind, ricocheted off a wagon-wheel on to an ox, for which he got well kicked; then made a rush through the fire, upset a saucepan, and scalded himself, and finally laid down in the most unnatural position, and ultimately, from sheer exhaustion, I imagined, remained silent.

Such silence, under the circumstances, was but natural, for the unfortunate had expired without a struggle, without an effort, and I fear without a regret from any one. No wound could I discover about the defunct, nothing to indicate the cause of

death, if I except a slight swelling about the eyes. The whole affair was so sudden that I was really startled; as I think people generally are when they witness such a result without knowing the cause. However, I consoled myself with the knowledge that, of all the pack, this victim could best be spared.

The cause of the greyhound's death was soon explained. In the morning one of the boys went to the vicinity of where the offal had been deposited, to procure some firewood. While pounding away with his hatchet on a log, he thought he smelt a snake, and immediately afterwards a large cobra (*Naia haje*, Smith) came forth, which he instantly killed. On inspection its poison sacs were fairly bursting with venom.

From the time the dog was bitten till it died not over seven or eight minutes can have passed. With a human being the result would, doubtless, have been the same; not a very long time to consider to whom you are to leave your personal effects.

CHAPTER XIV.

STALKING.

African Game—Successful Shots—Spooring.

PERHAPS the reader will think that I exaggerate the incidents that I have narrated in reference to an African night, but this is not so; as they have been told, so they occurred.

Africa, although no new country, is at the present time the hunting-ground *par excellence* of the whole world. The buffalo has nominally disappeared from North America; the grizzly bear, the terror of the Rocky Mountains, is now scarcely to be found; but Africa still possesses such animals as are worthy of the intrepidity and skill of the most daring sportsman. If the traveller goes far enough into this great continent he will there meet an elephant worth slaying, not the semi-domestic beast of India; and instead of the tiger of Hindostan he will be brought into the presence of the lion, and within range of

numerous breeds of antelopes, such giants in size and form as almost to startle man when he raises his rifle to accomplish their destruction.

If the reader is entering with me into a country where such mammoth beasts of the chase as the giraffe, hippopotamus, and rhinoceros exist, he must not be horrified at being thrown into contact with jackals and all such small game, before he arrives at the scene where the greater beasts are to be found.

As I finally turned in under the blankets that night, I could distinctly hear pauw calling to each other on the adjoining flat, reminding me that they were in my vicinity, and that it was my intention to add some of them to my larder as soon as time was granted for me to carry out my purpose.

Pauw, like all feathered game (except the duck family), will not permit themselves to be approached when the dew is on their plumage, so I delayed my expedition against them till the sun was high in the heavens. The fire of our camp had disturbed this game; consequently, I did not find it until I had ridden nearly a mile. Their position was admirably selected to guard against surprise, nothing occurring

on the flat veldt in front except ant-hills (the characteristic marking of this part of the African country) to intervene between me and the quarry I sought after.

There are few persons who have not seen a drove of turkeys in a farm-yard. How stupid they apparently look, but, at the same time, how confoundedly cunning they really are! So it was with these pauw; for I soon found out that if I did not practise my best stalking skill I should not get within rifle range of them.

I was, on this occasion, riding an old mare, her recommendation being that she had all the endearing characteristics of a dog. Well, I left the old thing to try to stalk the pauw; but no, the birds would not have it, for as quickly as I advanced, as quickly did they retire. At length an extra high ant-hill occurred, and I resolved to make use of it, and, I think, crawled about a hundred yards to do so, when one of the birds got on another ant-hill, telegraphed some kind of message to its comrades, and then all sailed away till far beyond range.

It was now apparent to me that I was out-

generalled, so it became necessary, if I desired to be successful, to enter into a new plan of campaign. Therefore I went for one of my boys; I selected the Hottentot, as he was the lighter weight, and thus accompanied, recommenced the hunt. After traversing a couple of miles of as beautiful riding ground as the most fastidious could desire (barring the ant-hills), I again discovered the pauw, considerably augmented in numbers, indolently feeding on a sunny slope fairly sprinkled with karroo brush. But their position was so open that for a long time I feared it would be impossible for me to get within easy range.

I was about deciding to give up the pursuit as impossible, or chance a long distance shot at the birds, when it struck me that between me and them ran a *donga*, or land-crack. A careful inspection of the ground with my field-glass assured me that such was the case; still I felt more than uncertain that if I gained its friendly shelter I should be within a desirable shooting distance. However, Master Tottie and I withdrew from our place of observation, and held counsel on the subject. The decision was that he was to make a detour with the mare, and get to

windward of the birds, keeping at such a distance from them as not to alarm them, but, if possible, drive them a little before him and towards me.

Thus instructed, my servant left, while I, after some trouble, got into the donga. It was very regular along its bottom, and just sufficiently deep for me comfortably to crawl along it on hands and knees without being seen. Having judged correctly the distance to be travelled, I gently raised my head, my cap being ornamented with a bunch of grass, when to my delight I observed that the birds had not in any way been alarmed, for some had already settled down as if resolved to commence their siesta.

I could make out no fewer than nine of these noble birds within a space of fifty yards of each other, yet the nearest to my place of ambush was too far off for me to be certain of hitting it with my Express. However, I exercised patience, and in this instance the quality indeed proved a virtue, for, after a delay of twenty minutes or so, first one and then a second of those pauw that had been sitting down rose to their feet, and all began to erect themselves to their greatest height and look earnestly to windward. This was an anxious moment, for my success or failure almost

depended upon my Tottie's prudence, for if he hurried the lot would take to flight, but if he behaved cautiously and did not point his course for them, in all human probability they would direct their steps towards my hiding-place. Tottie was a great Nimrod in my estimation. On this occasion he did not lose his reputation, and I vowed inwardly that he should have an extra supply of tobacco, when what appeared to be the largest of the hens, with cautious, hesitating, and graceful steps, took the lead and came towards me. Soon another, and then another, and finally all followed her example, not after the manner of grouse or partridge, but as if each were acting independently of the other. Believe me, it was one of the noblest sights a sportsman ever beheld, for the pauw is amongst birds what the salmon is amongst fish.

Old as I am, and much as I have shot, I could feel my heart beat quicker and quicker as the space between the game and myself became diminished. At last only a hundred yards severed us, and their manner appearing uneasy, as if the game suspected danger, I waited for two birds to get aligned, when I pulled the trigger of the right barrel, and with the report a couple of the pauw turned over; then, springing to

my feet, I fired at the largest cock, just as he gained flight, and brought him down with my left barrel. I was in luck that time, three of the finest game birds in the world falling to two shots.

It was not long before fresh cartridges were in the breeches of my rifle, and I was alongside two of my trophies, for the other had disappeared, and how, goodness knows, for my eyes were not off it for more than a few seconds. But miracles do occur sometimes, and, I am inclined to imagine, more frequently to the sportsman than to any other person. It often astonishes one where a quail or a woodcock can have got to, when we feel convinced that we have marked it down to an inch, and are equally certain that the bird is dead. But here was a fowl infinitely larger than a turkey, knocked over at a less distance than a hundred yards ; yet, search as I would, not a vestige of it could be seen.

I began to think that there must be an ant-bear hole in the neighbourhood, and that the wounded pauw had crawled into it, so began reconnoitring for one of this interesting animal's burrows, and, while so engaged, was joined by my Tottie, who had a grin on his countenance so broad that it

opened his mouth from ear to ear. The vision of a future picking of the bones of two pauws was sufficient pleasure in anticipation to account for this; but, when he heard that I had knocked over another and that it could not be found, sorrow took the place of mirth and regret that of anticipation.

My sable attendant was a good "spoorer," but, from the ground being dry and the grass withered, it was no easy task to ask him, skilled as he was, to unravel the mystery, more especially as I had tramped a good deal over the locality. I pointed out to him exactly where I thought the bird fell. Round and round it he circled, at length gave a grunt, and in satisfied words explained, "Him down!" After that, noting the direction of the wind, he made a cast—skilful as ever was made by veteran huntsman—picked up the trail, ran it a short distance, lost it, then took it up again. At length he came to a dead stop. This was not to be wondered at, for karroo brush grew here and there through the veldt grass, thus affording considerable covering to the soil. Mounting my mare and bearing my trophies, I followed at a slow pace, now beginning to despair of success; but "never give in" is a

good motto, for just then I saw the Hottentot hurl his knobkerrie, and a second afterwards caught sight of the pauw going like a racehorse up the donga. Shaking up my mare, I went in hot pursuit; but, encumbered as I was with the other birds, I found that I should be nowhere in the chase in the rough ground till I disencumbered myself. So I threw them and my rifle to the darkie, and received in exchange his knobkerrie, and thus armed, resolved to go in and win. The mare was in good condition, keen for a run, and handy as a polo pony, so I had little or no doubt of the result.

I know men who have told me they have ridden down an ostrich. I can only say I have several times seen it tried, but never successfully. To catch a wounded pauw on horseback is quite work enough for me. I will not for a moment infer that the mare had not the heels of the bird, but I defy any horse living to have kept alongside of it, from the rapidity with which it turned. Moreover, each of these turns was so ingeniously made as to place me upon the wrong side of my prey for striking. Thus, after two miles of most exasperating and disap-

pointing toil, I reluctantly took a pull on the mare, and gave it up, I being of the two the more distressed.

As the sun had now got warm, I returned to camp, but with the resolution of renewing the hunt, aided by a couple of my best greyhounds. The sun was about two hours high when I reached the spot where I had quitted the chase; the dogs were fresh, and I anticipated a splendid run. That I should soon find the bird I had little doubt, as the ever-useful Donna was one of the party. Already she had begun to feather, when my chum, who had accompanied me, gave the view halloo, and, true enough, about two hundred yards before us was the pauw, legging it like a giraffe. Soon as we saw the game, the dogs were as quick. We were just getting settled into what promised to be an exciting run, when, like a thunderbolt, a bird descended upon our quarry. A few violent, spasmodic flaps of the wing and all was over. When we reached the spot, we naturally concluded that the depredator would give way; but no, nothing was further from his intention, and it was with the utmost difficulty

that we could prevent the dogs from feeling the power of his talons.

To save the pauw, the gallant eagle had to be knocked on the head, which was a sad necessity, for this is not only one of the bravest but one of the most beautiful of the falconidæ. Its powers of flight are something marvellous, and this may well be imagined when I state that its wings protrude far beyond its tail. It is only to be found in Africa, and in the locality in which we then were it is the most common of the birds of prey. Morning and evening it can be seen sailing in the heavens at an immense height, its wings apparently motionless, until a victim attracts its attention, when the velocity of its descent is probably unrivalled by any bird of prey. During the heat of noon it rests occasionally upon a rock, more generally upon a tree, but its wariness is so great that it is almost impossible to get within shot of it. The base of its beak is dark orange, lower down yellow, while the tip is black. The iris of this species is a magnificent brilliant transparent brown, while the feet and the skin between the eye and the beak are coral



RUFUS-BACKED BATELOUR EAGLE (*Helotarsus ecaudatus*).

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red. Such a combination of colours, united to its resolute, defiant appearance, renders this bird a worthy representative of the great game country it inhabits.

CHAPTER XV.

INSUBORDINATION.

Cookey—Moonlight—Carrion Feeders.

SEVERAL natives visited the wagons soon after sundown, two of whom I knew, and in whose word I had implicit confidence. They reported a great scarcity of water on the route I intended travelling, and that there was not more than a sufficiency of the precious fluid in the vley in our front—where I had at least expected to find an abundance, and remain a week—for twenty-four hours' use, and moreover, what existed was so tramped and polluted by game that it was scarcely fit to be utilised. Upon this information my friend and self had a consultation, the result being that we resolved to trek that evening as soon as the moon rose, and we did so at about half-past nine. When our decision was communicated to our attendants, it was easy to see that it was most dis-

pleasing to them; for, although they said nothing, their conduct was sufficiently eloquent. Having ordered the *fachees* (barrels for carrying water) to be filled, I retired to my wagon to put things in order for the trek. This occupied me for quite half-an-hour, after which I thought I would visit the boys' fire, and see if my orders had been attended to. Just as I suspected, the *fachees* had not been unhooked even from their fastenings, and had not, therefore, received a drop of water. Calling up the drivers, I repeated to each my former instructions, informing them that I would return in thirty minutes to see that I had been obeyed; but as I was leaving them, that fat, greasy beast of a cook made a remark far from complimentary to white men generally, and myself in particular. I had long known this fellow to be a soldier lawyer, and a very artful and dangerous one, too, so had made up my mind, when circumstances justified me, to fetch him up with a round turn. Therefore, when Master Cookey made his observation, I turned to him and told him that I should not only expect, when I returned, to see that my orders in regard to the water were obeyed, but that he had all the cooking apparatus clean and packed.

ready to be upon the wagon tray (the place where it was carried on the line of march).

Although I was not aware that any lions had been seen along our intended line of route for two or three years, yet, as these animals are frequently compelled to change their hunting ground from want of water or scarcity of food, I deemed it desirable that both my companion and self should have all our guns loaded and some surplus ammunition laid out.

Another cause for my taking this step was, that from the troubled state of the frontier, arising from there being a big war between Massouw and Moshette on one side, and Moncorani and Monsewa on the other, gunpowder had become too valuable to throw away upon wild beasts; and as wild animals, in a wondrously quick time, learn where they can or cannot intrude, I thought it was just possible, more especially as game was reported plentiful about the vley we were making for, that His Majesty the King might be interviewed on the road. To welcome him with a royal salute—one becoming to his high caste—was, therefore, my solicitude. To make such important preparations took quite half-an-hour, after which I

returned to the boys' fire to see if my orders had been obeyed.

The *fachees* were filled and slung in their places, but the flesh-pots were lying around the fire or in use, exactly as they had been previous to my orders. On asking for explanation of this dereliction of duty, I received in answer, first prevarication, next abuse, so I seized Master Cookey by the collar of his coat with the right hand, with the left foot sent his legs from under him, and with an effort threw him upon his back among those who appeared to be his supporters. In an instant three of these were upon their feet, and showed that they were prepared to avenge the insult to their leader, but they wisely hesitated when they observed "Chummy" at my elbow. He was a good six-footer, very undemonstrative, but when called upon he was "all there." But, in spite of this, these misguided men did not learn wisdom during their pause, but came on with a rush, led by a stalwart Zulu—a sulky dog of a fellow, who had often previously been suspected of inciting to mutiny—but down he went as if shot; and his supporters, thinking better of the matter, fled into the bush. One of the late

arrivals, an old acquaintance of mine, had felled the big Zulu with his knobkerrie; and the whole was done so quickly, and, I may say, expertly, that none knew who had struck the blow until the whole affair was over. This episode I have narrated at length, for it is but a sample of what frequently occurs when your people are ordered to march from a camp where there is an abundant supply of food.

The moon was up sooner than we expected, so that by half-past nine the cattle were in the yoke; plenty of grass, plenty of water and rest, had had the desired effect upon them, and had made them look fit to go for a man's life. "In-spanning," that is, putting the cattle in order before placing them in the yoke, is always an interesting as well as a bustling sight. It is done in this way:—the cattle of both wagons are driven up, and when halted, the animals of each span separate from one another. These are driven apart, but still there may be a young ox or an obstreperous one, which will intrude into the wrong division, so he has to be hunted out, and, in course of this, he generally gets a good hiding and pelting for the

unnecessary trouble he is giving. When each span is assembled, the driver places himself in front of them with the *rheim* of each beast upon his arm, while the *voorloper* takes his place behind armed with a *jambok*, by the application of which each bullock is kept in its place till the driver has placed his *rheims* over the horns of each. They are then led in pairs to their respective yokes, the after oxen being generally "inspanned" last. As a rule, the most mutinous and troublesome ox immediately succumbs to the control of the driver the moment he feels the noose over his horns; should he not do so, he will have ample reason to regret his objection to discipline, for the driver will not brook such conduct for a moment, and at once suppresses it by the severest means.

I have had experience of how cattle are handled both in America and Australia, in which places the work is done entirely on horseback; but the African driver and *voorloper* does all his work on foot, and there is no reason to imagine that the beasts of the two first-mentioned places are one whit more dangerous than those of Africa. Of course, occasionally serious accidents do happen, but they

are very rare. In Spain I have often witnessed the adroitness and grace with which a matador, or tulero, avoids a bull's charge. A smart and experienced Tottie is quite as adroit as the Spaniard; of his grace we will say nothing.

If the traveller in Africa wishes to make a long and quick trek, let him do it at night, particularly when there is a moon, and he will be surprised how his cattle get over the road. The coolness prevailing at those hours doubtless does much towards this. At the same time I think the uncertain light gives a helping hand, for in it the beasts have not the power of distinguishing in the distance, pastures by which they would love to linger or wade belly deep in.

A good start was made. The sand was nowhere heavy enough to be a serious obstacle, so, with the exception of an "outspan" of an hour shortly after midnight, nothing took place to prevent our logging a good journey. All night was to be heard on either side the bleating call of springboks, the whistle and rasping neigh of quahas, the guttural, jerky note of ostrich, while the pretty little jackal tittered away from the adjoining ridges, and

the hyena's deep-toned half-whistle, half-sigh struck frequently upon the ear. Several times we passed through considerable areas of brush, but towards daylight we traversed one that seemed interminable. At the coldest hour of the morning, that immediately preceding the advent of day, one of the dogs that had wandered some distance from the track sang out most lustily. I knew from the voice that it was a black Kaffir cur which I had picked up along the road. As she was a plucky little animal, and most watchful at night, I had grown to like her very much, and therefore felt solicitude for her safety. Soon after, however, she joined me, when I discovered over her left cheek two deep longitudinal cuts, evidently the handicraft of some of the cat family. It was not the work of a leopard, for that animal would have carried the bitch off bodily, so I concluded it was the doing of a *caraçal*, a near relation of the lynx of Europe and America, and tolerably abundant in the bushy and rocky parts of this country.

At sun-up we "outspanned" for a couple of hours, when we again got the bullocks into the yoke, hoping to continue travelling till an hour before the sun reached the meridian. While

enjoying my coffee I noticed that one of my most valuable dogs had a fit of lethargy upon him, which I could not account for. He evinced no indications of pain, but showed an evident dislike to move about or to be in the society of his comrades. The cause of this sudden alteration in the animal's character I was at a loss to account for; nevertheless it was very marked, for, without exception, he was always the most light-hearted and demonstrative of the pack. Being very busy getting the cattle "inspanned," and seeing the horses started with the rest of the live stock, I forgot all about this dog and his ailments till we had travelled about five miles, when I discovered that he had been left behind. I had one man especially told off to look after the dogs, and this was his sole duty, so the reader may imagine that I gave him a rating of words that were very forcible. I then rode back in search of the lost one, and where I expected to find him, there he was. I could not have made a mistake in my search, for upon every ant-hill in the vicinity of where the poor beast lay were a couple of southern corbivan (*Corvultur albicollis*), birds as large as, and probably



SOUTH AFRICAN GRIFFON VULTURE (*Gyps Kalbii*)

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more powerful than, our ravens, waiting for the dog's demise. It was a wonder to me that they had so much patience, for before now I have seen a brace of them attack a wounded steinbok and harass it to death. However, the corbivans had not molested my poor dog, nor had some dozen South African griffon vulture (*Gyps Kolbii*) that were sitting in his immediate vicinity, redolent with a gravity in their manner only to be expected from the members of a coroner's inquest.

When I looked upon the greyhound, I was more astounded than I had been in my life before. Its body was swollen up to twice, possibly three times, its original size, and on passing my hands along his flanks the air that was accumulated beneath produced a crackling sound, not unlike electricity in a new *karross*, but a great deal more distinct. It was evidently a case of *emphysema*, but what had produced it was a question I could not answer. I have known animals shot through the lungs get it, but in such cases there was a visible cause, although a very extraordinary one; still, there was a cause. In the case of the dog I was not aware of one, nor could I discover any.

The poor beast knew me when I approached him, and testified his pleasure at my presence as dogs do. I am not very soft-hearted, but I almost shed tears to see the poor thing in such a strait. After some coaxing I got him on his legs, and, by exercising a deal of patience, I succeeded in making him try and exert himself; and so, between rests and short walks, we at length reached the camping ground. The impudence of these corbivan (I had better call them ravens, for, save the white collar round their necks, there is little difference between the two) was most trying. Doubtless they thought that I was taking their legitimate prey from them, and, in return, tried to intimidate me by making swoops within a foot or two of my own or horse's head, causing the latter to become quite nervous; or lighting in the track, and cawing within a few yards of my advance, as if premeditating an assault on my shins. At length my patience was exhausted, and I drew my revolver and knocked over the ringleader, missing his rival with a second shot. Poor bird! His companions attacked him as soon as I had passed, and those who, a moment before, had been admiring his pluck, doubtless made a

meal upon him. This is contradiction of the West Indian nigger's assertion, "Dog no eat dog, massa, no nevar."

After this episode the ravens dropped behind, but the vultures followed me into camp, where they perched upon the few withered adjoining mimosas, drew their heads down close between their wings, and by their manner expressed a willingness to await results, as if the chances were, in their belief, five to one in their favour; but the carrion-eating brutes were out of their reckoning this time, for my poor dog, after enduring many a day of sickness, swallowing a dose of croton oil of no infinitesimal quantity, and quite a box of Holloway's pills, recovered sufficiently to keep up with the wagon, but it was a long time before he again took an interest in springbok and duikers.

CHAPTER XVI.

NATURAL HISTORY.

Sight or Scent—Ravens—Vultures.

It has long been a vexed question among naturalists whether vultures discover their prey by sight or scent. I do not pretend for a moment that I have had better opportunities of judging than other people, or that I possess more discrimination. Only this I will say, that, in my belief, it is upon the organ of sight they depend for their food, and not upon their sense of smell. It must not be understood from this that I think vultures destitute of scent; but I do think that in them the sense is not excessively developed. I have known a large animal, such as a wildebeest or buffalo, shot in thick brushwood, where there was only an occasional scattering of trees, remain for a day without being detected by the vultures,

although, if you gazed steadily in the heavens, numbers of these birds could be seen sailing far aloft. The moment after the game had been paunched, the scavenger-beetle would find it out, however light the wind might be, and if you went down the wind for half a mile, or even more, you could hear these busy insects booming past you, proceeding with unerring precision to where the offal lay. Not so with the vulture; for I have known them feed on a carcase not more than a few hundred yards from another, and never discover its whereabouts. At the same time, it should be stated that the dead game which they did not find was well covered over with limbs of trees and brushwood; but this covering would in no way obstruct the smell arising from flesh that had commenced to decompose being disseminated.

If a dead beast be secreted under a thick screen of bushes, the first bird to discover its whereabouts I have invariably found to be the corbivan. This possibly arises from the fact that the flight of this bird is generally close to the earth, and that it is of such an inquisitive turn of mind that it examines carefully anything that strikes it as new, or previously unobserved. Satisfied that the novelty

is not an ambushade, inquisitiveness induces it to pry further, when the secret is discovered. This may occasionally be the case; but more frequently, I think, they find their prey by noting an unusual number of scavenger-beetles hurrying in one direction and following them up. And, lastly, the sight of a jackal, with his nose in the air, or of a hyena upon the trail of something, will bring every raven in the vicinity around him to watch his proceedings, well knowing, as they doubtless do, that these nocturnal gentry would not be abroad in daylight unless there were attractions worthy of such out-of-time exertion. As soon as the raven discovers the carrion, like a very foolish creature, it begins to publish to the world its success, when every one of its species hastens to participate in the banquet.

Before condemning them, however, for doing this, it would be well to learn if a trade-union does not exist among these birds. Whether or not such be the case, the vulture, high aloft, notes this stir among the sable gentry, and knowing well, from experience, what it means, closes its wings and comes to earth with sufficient velocity to indicate that it does not intend to be the last at the

feast, although uninvited. The extraordinary agility of this individual vulture strikes all his race within sight with amazement. Nothing but powerful reasons could induce their friend to such unaccountable velocity, they doubtlessly argue within themselves, so they hurry to learn the cause, and others hurry after them, and they keep coming and continue coming till not enough meat is left on the carcase, whether it be originally as large as an elephant or as small as a steinbok, to bait the tiniest hook to catch a minnow with.

The only occurrence I know resembling the above scene, is the actions of the members of the legal profession pouring into the Law Courts, when there is a *cause célèbre* on trial, in which both plaintiff and defendant are reputed to be millionaires.

“Amba! Amaga! Trek!” and almost before the last word is finished by the driver, his whip swings round his head, and by a sudden backward turn of the wrist the lash produces a report as loud as a gun-shot. Woe, then, to the ox that does not get his shoulder firmly against the yoke, for an eagle eye will detect his delinquency, and a skilful hand punish him with a severity that the uninitiated could never expect to be possible with a whip. Two more

long treks over moderately heavy ground brought us to the expected vley, the water of which we found in such a filthy state as to be utterly useless for all human purposes. Nevertheless, the bullocks drank abundantly and the horses and dogs sparingly, so we resolved to make as short a stay in the vicinity as possible.

Another reason for not delaying our departure was that the grass in the neighbourhood had been cropped so closely by the game that there was scarcely an ox's mouthful to be obtained in an acre. The edges of a horsepond in a farmyard could not have been more thoroughly kneaded than were those of this slough, while the variety of spoor indented upon its margin was sufficient to warm the heart of a sportsman, and drive into ecstasy the dabbler in natural history. Accompanied by my Totties I made a tour of inspection, but could not detect the slightest trace of evidence that the king of beasts had been in the vicinity. I had almost expected this to be different, for where the wild game assembles in force, there His Majesty is almost certain to be found. This pan of water was surrounded on every side by dense brush; thus, without searching for it, we had

no chance of learning how close game was to be found, and as all were too tired from our late journey, nobody seemed disposed to go forth and seek for it.

At moon-up we were again "inspanned," and, soon after starting, the features of the landscape underwent a complete change, open park-like country replacing the dense jungle we had so lately passed through. Sailing over a smooth sea with just sufficient wind to get six or seven knots out of your craft, galloping over a good grass country on a well-bred horse up to your weight, are both delightful sensations; but neither are more enjoyable than a trek across the "high veldt" at night, when the moon is at her full. The temperature at that time is all that can be desired, while your beasts invariably appear in such excellent spirits that they impart lightness of heart to both master and attendants. On turning a small clump of bush that jutted into the track, we were suddenly brought to a halt by a native challenging us. This stranger soon after made his appearance, when, having inspected us and being satisfied that no danger was to be apprehended from our party, he gave a low plaintive whistle (in imitation

of the night plover), which was rapidly answered by half-a-dozen similar calls, each coming from a different direction, and shortly afterwards we were joined by six natives. These people, we learned, were an outpost of a Batlapin chief on his way to Kooruman to complain of the repeated thefts of cattle that had lately been made from his tribe by Massouw's or Moshette's people. As an advanced guard, advanced pickets, or for feeling their way through an enemy's country, there is no race of men in the world more admirably suited for these purposes. We learned from them that their chief Bareekie was only a few miles in our front, so that, after giving our cattle and horses a rest, we should be with him soon after sunrise. Such proved to be the case; but, early as the hour was, when we reached his *locale* he and his counsellors were already assembled in the *kotla* of an adjoining village, discussing affairs of state. Before "outspanning," I sent my driver to report our arrival, and learn where we were to unyoke, a courtesy that never should be omitted when visiting the residence of Boer or Bechuana. The outspan that was given us was close to an abundant supply of water, shaded with innumerable willows, and altogether presented

as agreeable a *coup d'œil* as the most fastidious could desire.

Breakfast had scarcely been got under weigh before three persons, in European clothes, approached us, followed by a tag-rag and bobtail of semi-naked savages. The centre of these three was his Serene Highness. On his left was an adjoining chief named Toto, while the right-hand place was occupied by Morocco, without exception the best interpreter and most agreeable—I may say gentlemanly—Bechuana I ever met. Of course, the usual hand-shaking accompanied our greeting, which was scarcely over when a demand was made for a *soupje* of *brandewein*. To this demand I had to comply, for in this chief's country we intended hunting, and from him obtaining guides, etc. The object of our visit being explained, the chief laughed, and through Morocco told us that perhaps we would get hunted ourselves, as he had been a week or two before. On requesting an explanation, we received the following :

“ I started from Honey vley to come here. I had two wagons and a number of my people with me. The night was dark and stormy, but that did not matter, for every one knew the road since he was

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a boy. Honey vley is never without lions, but as long as they don't kill cattle we leave them alone, for, you see, they furnish many a feed for my bush people. Soon after sundown we started, but at midnight, as we were going through a very stony, rough piece of *kloof*, where the brush comes down to the track, a lion growled in front of us, answered, after a minute or two, by a roar, and immediately after seven or eight lions took up the signal, and made such a row around us that we could scarcely hear each other speak. We are accustomed to lions, so the drivers cracked their whips at them, and shouted to them to be off about their business, while we lighted fire-brands to throw in their faces; but before we had succeeded in doing the last, the oxen wheeled round sharp, nearly upset the wagons, and refused, in spite of every exertion, to go on. When this occurred it is a wonder that there was not a general smash-up; and there would have been, but that my drivers were good men, and the cattle knew them well. Soon we had fires lighted, but that didn't drive the lions off, for up till morning they remained around us, roaring incessantly. The oxen had now become so thoroughly

scared that they refused to go forward, so there was nothing left for us to do, but to return to Honey vley. When we got back there, I sent one of my oldest hunters to tell Toto, chief of the Langberg, how I had been stopped, and that I would join him in a few days. In a week my messenger didn't return. This I was surprised at, for he was known to be the speediest runner in the tribe. Another day passed without any tidings of him, so I sent some young men with their guns to look for him. A short distance beyond where the wagons had been stopped they found his rifle, a little further on his bandolier and kaross, and afterwards some of his bones. The spoor around showed what had killed him, for no rain had fallen to wash it out. It is not often that a lion kills a man in this part of the country, although I have known an old, worn-out beast, that had got too stiff to catch game, or too feeble to 'jump' an ox, to take a woman or a child. No, it is quite an uncommon circumstance in my country, but when you go up north on the edge of the desert, west from Secheley's, you look out. It is only a few days since I came through that kloof, with a number of my young men with me, all anxious to

kill the brutes that had eaten their comrade, yet although we searched the hill-sides, we could not see a sign of them."

This was a long speech for our new friend to make without getting thirsty, but he made up for the delay by the size of the drink he took to moisten his parched lips when he was finished. There is one thing to be said in his favour, he was exceedingly liberal with our liquor to his friends; if he should be so to his attendants with what is his own, he is doubtlessly considered a jolly good fellow. From the border warfare then being carried on between these tribes, ammunition had become exceedingly scarce amongst them, thus Master Bareekie importuned us in the most beseeching manner for a trifling supply, and after much pressing I consented to give him a couple of pounds of gunpowder, on condition that he would turn out all his available people to assist us on the morrow in a grand battue; further, that he should lend us a couple of his attendants to conduct us to the next water, who, in turn, were to procure us two guides to show us the way to Honey vley.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

Weaver-birds—Pangolin—A Leopard.

IN the afternoon my friend went off to look for some small buck among the adjoining *copjes*, while I took my shot-gun and proceeded up the river in search of anything edible or curious. If it had not been the dry season, this locality would have been very attractive in a botanist's eyes, but then game would have been scarcer, for water would have been scattered over the veldt, and not confined to the one water-course. Thus the time for collecting specimens of animal life is the least suited for researches of the scientist in that study.

In my route I came across a very numerous herd of cattle, on the backs of which were feeding large numbers of the buffalo weaver-birds (*Textor erythrorhynchus*). My presence, or the walking, or

even running of the beasts did not in the least seem to alarm them, or prevent them continuing at their labour, viz., divesting the cattle of the innumerable ticks with which they appear ever to be covered in this part of the world. With the buffalo they are also upon the same friendly terms, for not only do they do their best to free him of vermin, but further watch over him while he sleeps, and give him ample warning if anything dangerous approach his resting-place. Many a sportsman, through the officiousness of this meddlesome bird, has had his stalk destroyed; so doubtless angry language that has been hurled at it has been frequent and explicit. However, in spite of this disagreeable proclivity it must do a great amount of good, so is well deserving of pardon. These finches build in communities, the giraffe-acacia being usually the tree it selects, which is reported to die soon after being so utilised. The nests consist of an immense amount of twigs, ten times as many as would be supposed necessary for their purpose, and the whole is so firmly woven together as to render it a difficult matter to pull it apart. The entrance into their nursery is most skilfully fashioned, and would repel

the approach of anything larger than the smallest of snakes.

Another charming bird to be found abundant in this vicinity is the Namaqua dove (*Columba capensis*). It is very little larger than a canary, and is possessed of all the warm, soft, blended plumage of its species, with the exception of the black ring round its neck, which is larger and more distinct. The nest of this dove differs from that of its congeners, for it is very neatly put together, the fork of the limbs of a low bush being generally selected for its resting-place, and the eggs, which are semi-transparent, have a delicate pink tint; in fact, they are exactly such as would be expected to be produced by such a little darling.

Bareekie, the chief, had given me a youth as an attendant. His sharp eyes found me this dove's nest, but he was consulting his own interests, not mine, when he did so; for, before I became aware what the urchin was prying about, he had swallowed one egg, and was about to repeat the experiment on the other. However, I was in time to thwart his little game.

This youth was, or nearly so, a full-bred bushman, and had without exception the most repulsive figure

possible to imagine, for his limbs were no thicker than broomsticks ; yet his stomach protruded to an extent quite impossible to be imagined by a person not acquainted with the race. On the other hand, the little imp had a bright, merry eye, with a mouth that appeared destined for constant laughter. He was, I should think, about twelve years of age ; his manner and intelligence said that he could not be less ; still, I doubt if he exceeded four feet in height.

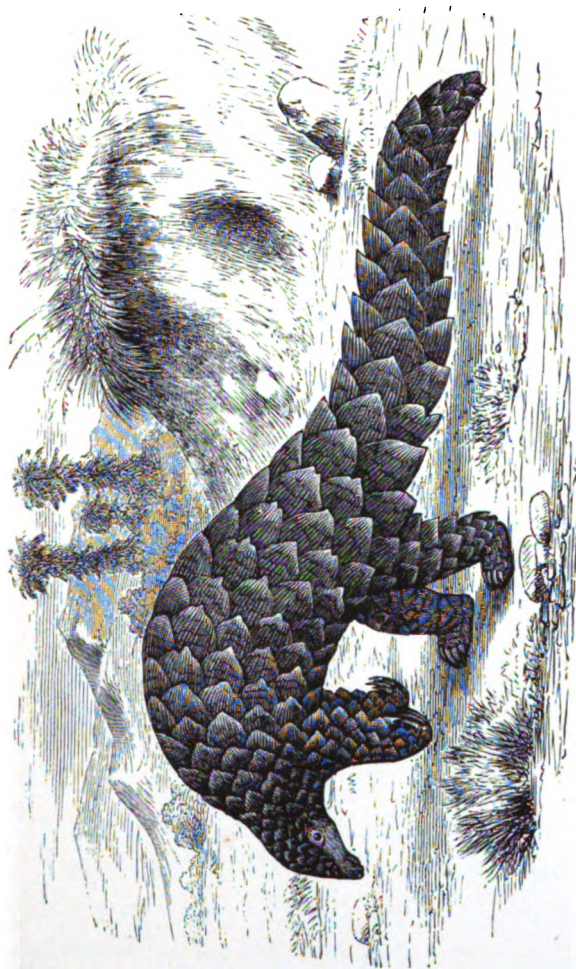
A species of iguana is very common in nearly all parts of South Africa, some of which grow to a considerable size. One of these brutes I spied in the river bed. Its attitude indicated that it was alarmed, and that it would be off into the reeds in another moment, so I fired a barrel at it. The shot was not deadly, but the reverse, for it seemed to put new life into the creature ; for, with a spring in the air and a couple of summersaults, it gained the water, which it soon lashed into a strong resemblance of soap-suds. I would now have given the stricken creature another barrel, and probably so ended matters, but that my retriever, my black boy, had not been taught to down charge, so rushed after the prey, directly in my line of fire. This tadpole of a creature

could run, too. There was no mistake in the rapidity with which he got over the ground ; for, in a moment after, he had the iguana by the tail, and although the water was up beyond his waist and the prey struggled most violently, once he had got his grip, like a bulldog he was resolved to keep it. That this youngster was accustomed to such emergencies was evident, for the knobkerrie which he had previously carried in his hand was now between his teeth, for well he knew that the first step to secure the brute was to get it out of the water, to do which required both hands. Moreover, while the wounded beast was floundering around and trying to dive I doubt much whether the youth could have handled his club effectively.

The iguana, which was over four feet long and very solidly made, appeared to be gifted with additional strength when it beheld its assailant, and tremendous were the efforts that it made to free itself ; but such tactics were unavailing and were relinquished, but not with the intention of resigning to fate. No, not a bit of it. Thus, instead of trying to get free, it endeavoured to turn upon its assailant, exhibiting at the same time

a most formidable mouth, but it never could reach the object it desired, for the boy, with a dexterous and powerful shake, forced it to straighten itself. I had little fear now who was to be victor. Step by step the young imp of darkness drew his prey on to the bank some feet clear of the water, then, with rapidity equal to a conjurer's, took his knob-kerrie in his right hand from his mouth, and with it showered such blows upon the amphibian as caused it to cease from troubling. I should like to have taken that boy with me; plenty of good food would have soon made wonderful and improving alterations in him. Although I pointed all this out to his chief, he would neither lend nor hire him to me. With such an addition, my *ménage* would have been perfect.

On a sandbank further up stream I found the spoor of a leopard. It had probably been made about sunrise. From the numerous small rocky *copjes* in the vicinity, I should not be surprised to find that these gentry were abundant hereabouts. On pointing out this spoor to the small boy, it was too good a treat for one man alone to be witness of the pantomimic actions he employed to endeavour to explain to me



PANGOLIN, OR SCALY ANT-EATER (*Manis Temminckii*).

To face page 154.

what had made it. It was simply perfect even in the minutest details.

On my way home I got several shots at Hottentot teal, and two barrels into, not the brown, but the gray of a dense flock of guinea fowl, the result of which was that both myself and attendant were pretty well loaded before getting to the wagons.

Having told Morocco in the morning that I should like to purchase any queer animal that the natives had, more especially a young baboon or small gray monkey, I found, waiting anxiously my return, a crowd, but none possessed anything worth having, if I except a pangolin, or scaly ant-eater. At one period these extraordinary animals were common enough all over South Africa, but of late years they have become scarcer; this is the more to be regretted as they are great destroyers of that insect pest of the country, ants. However, the black people have found out that they are a *bonne bouche*; thus they wage a constant war upon them, as they do against the *aard-vark*. The body of the pangolin is covered with large scales, not unlike the divisions of a fir-cone, and lap over each other with the

greatest precision. When attacked, it rolls itself up after the manner of a hedgehog, in which formation it is able to defy even the formidable jaws of the hyena. But the Bushman, or Bechuana, armed with his assegai, cannot thus be thwarted; for, rolling the unfortunate creature over till the opening is discovered where the tail laps over the head, he inserts into it his weapon till a vital part is reached. The mode of progression of this animal is very novel, for, instead of walking on the soles of its feet, it only uses the outer sides, keeping the claws turned in.

After supper, while endeavouring to get my new pet to unroll himself and permit me to cultivate his acquaintance, we were disturbed by a tremendous hullabaloo from the vicinity of the adjoining cattle kraal, women and children yelling and men shouting, while a number of Bechuanas sitting around my camp fire enjoying the edifying conversation and tobacco of my Hottentots, seized brands and rushed off in the direction of the disturbance. One of my people called to me that a hyena had got into the kraal amongst the goats, so, picking up my handiest

gun, which, as chance would have it, was a smooth-bore loaded with buckshot, I rushed round to the further side of the enclosure, with just a hope that the intruder would attempt to make his exit there.

Although the moon was up, the light was exceedingly bad, for the heavens surrounding it were covered with a dense mass of flakey white clouds, such as we should designate in England a mackerel sky, thus it was anything but desirable for shooting. Night shooting at all times is uncertain, but under such circumstances it is particularly so. What between the cursing of the men, the shrill screeching of the women, the crying of children and the bleating of goats, such a pandemonium of sounds is seldom heard, so it would be a brave wild animal indeed that did not get out of the vicinity as soon as possible. I was standing at a corner of the fence that composed the kraal; it was made of branches of the prickly mimosa, piled stiff and solidly to the height of six feet, from the bottom of which I concluded that the hyena must have torn out a passage or undermined an entrance. In

consequence I kept my eyes fixed on a parallel line, eighteen inches or more above the surface of the soil. To do this I was forced to stoop, with one knee upon the ground. I had not been more than a few seconds in this position when almost directly over my head passed what appeared a shadow; the light at the instant was better than it had been, enabling me at once to see that the marauder was a leopard, and not the animal suspected. Springing to my feet, I fired both barrels where I deemed the big cat should be, but I had little anticipation of a successful result. The only thing that struck me as strange was that as soon as my shots were delivered I heard the thief utter his well-known barking grunt, which ultimately became fainter and fainter as he approached nearer to the adjoining *copjes*. That he had dropped his prey, if he had succeeded in making a capture, was certain; for, with his mouth full, it would have been impossible for him to make this noise. At this conjuncture I was joined by a number of the natives, who asserted that the beast was hit. My opinion, however, was the reverse, for such a result

could only have been a mere chance. Firebrands were nevertheless brought, and a search made to see if blood could be found. In this we were successful, but it was only from the carcase of a kid about two or three weeks old, and, consequently, little larger than a well-grown hare.

The unexpected reception the big cat had received at such close quarters had doubtless alarmed him, so in his fright he had dropped his prey. This animal was well known by the natives, as he had been in the habit of paying that identical kraal a weekly visit for some months, and having always succeeded in effecting his purpose without interruption, no doubt a couple of heavy charges of buck-shot whistling about him in close proximity, so startled him as to cause him to forget the object he had in view, and thus drop the prey he had secured. Daylight revealed nothing to justify the supposition that the leopard had been hit—scarcely a flattering tribute to my skill in marksmanship. To miss a beast of that size at, say, twenty or twenty-five yards, with a couple of charges of buck-shot—even with such uncertain light—was indeed

had shooting; so, as the reader may imagine, my friend "Chummy" thought proper to chaff me, not once, but half-a-dozen times during the next day or two.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GOOD SPORT.

Klipspringers—Aard-vark.

I AM a great believer in the efficacy of a charge of buckshot at close quarters, but twenty-five yards is nearly double what should be considered that distance; so that it is far from certain whether I was justified in discharging both barrels of my gun at this formidable animal, more especially as my aim, through the defective light, must have been anything but certain. However, I did so, and probably should do so again under similar circumstances. But I do not make this assertion with a view of inducing others to do likewise, for old hands are known to take liberties which would be condemned as unpardonable in younger votaries of the chase.

I can well imagine any old Indian sportsman, whose eyes may chance to read these experiences,

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growling audibly at any one being barbarous enough to shoot at a leopard with buckshot, and to be brazen enough to tell of the exploit afterwards; but then he must remember under what circumstances the affair took place. India has unquestionably produced many of the finest "all-round sportsmen" known, but in some points I think they display an excess of punctiliousness as to the mode in which field sports should be conducted, and the above might possibly be a case to which they would take exception.

For my own part, when in search of dangerous animals, I think a man is perfectly justified in using what missiles he deems to be the most certain to guarantee success; and certainly the effect of a charge of buckshot out of a ten-bore gun, with five drachms of powder behind it, at ten to fifteen paces, is most terrible. It is generally acknowledged in Africa that there is no animal so dangerous and difficult to stop as the buffalo (*Bos caffer*). In this I entirely agree; yet I have known a charge of buckshot, at short range, save a hunter's life, and bag the assailant. It occurred in this way. I and some acquaintances had gone down from the Transvaal gold-fields to a district of country situate

about sixty miles north and east from our starting-place. Large game was then very abundant in that locality, particularly *impala*. One of our party, a German, shot fairly with loopers (buckshot), but very indifferently with ball, so naturally he preferred using the former when possible. Shortly before sun-down he fired at an *impala** which was crossing him, knocked it over, but in a moment after it was on its feet and gained some dense brush skirting a watercourse. Believing that the stricken game could not go far, he called off a couple of Kaffirs from the beaters and went in pursuit. When within twenty yards of the edge of the jungle, he heard the noise of some large animal rushing through it. The German was not aware of what was coming, but the natives were, so they bolted right and left for the nearest accessible tree. My friend was not kept long in doubt of what had caused the alarm, for out of the brush rushed a cow buffalo, head and tail in the air, which charged for him. When she was only a few paces off, and before she had lowered her head to use her horns, he gave her his first barrel into the top of her breast. This reception made the infuriated beast alter her

* A large bush bok.

course to the left, when she got the second barrel close behind the point of the shoulder; a heavy lurch and powerful effort to keep her legs followed, which was so far successful that the wounded animal succeeded in regaining her original shelter.

It is most dangerous at any time to follow a wounded buffalo into thick cover, more especially for white men to do so, as their clothing militates against their activity, and marks them out as a special object of attack. Although we all knew this, and our friend was equally well informed, to follow up his game he was determined upon; so with two of the Kaffirs he took up the spoor. However, they had not to go far before they found the prey, dead, and a calf only a day or two old by the carcass. I mention this as a proof of what loopers can do at short range when used by a person who has nerve to withhold his fire till the quarry is but a short distance from him, not as a recommendation for their employment. At the same time, let those who choose to use them do so, but let me have the bullet; for it is certainly a far more sportsmanlike missile, and can be successfully used at distances where the other would be perfectly useless.

To our no small astonishment, we discovered, when about to start for our grand battue, that Bareekie, Toto, and Morocco had departed at a late hour on the previous night for the south. This news was rather a damper to our ardour; but it was short-lived, for soon we learned that the worthy potentate had been as good as his word, so that already a great number of his liege subjects were assembled to give us the benefit of their assistance in the field. The less we say about the clothing of this levy the better, for, with the exception of a few of the head men, the others were without even the familiar kaross. As a rule, they were all fine specimens of the *genus homo*; upright, active, and well-formed, and evidently they looked forward with more than ordinary delight to a promise of sport. A few of these warriors carried assegais, but all were armed with the formidable knobkerrie, guns, of which the tribe possessed a considerable number, being conspicuous by their absence.

Beaters at home are generally a very awkward squad, difficult to get into their places, and infinitely more difficult to keep there; but not so with these people, who had evidently been trained to their

work, and knew perfectly how to do it. As we did not intend commencing operations until we reached some flats five or six miles off, my chum and I rode, and although we kept our nags at a pretty sharp pace, when we reached our destination there were neither "bellows to mend" nor stragglers among the crowd, which must have numbered upwards of a hundred persons.

Where we began business was just such a place as the most fastidious would have pronounced eminently suited for our purpose: a large extent of open grass land, with clumps of an acre or more of short brush closely scattered over it. The formation adopted was that familiar to all acquainted with the tactics of Zulus when on the war-path, viz., about a third of a circle, the extremities of which projected more than a hundred yards in advance of their centre. My friend and myself being armed with rifles, and consequently able to kill game at greater distance than our sable attendants, each took a flank. Scarcely had we broken ground, when the sport commenced to be fast and furious. Still, not a word was spoken, the only sound audible being the whistling of the knobkerries through the air. This

beat was about two miles in length, during which I only obtained five shots, my friend six, out of which we bagged six small buck, the natives, with their primitive weapons, killing a similar number, besides numerous partridges, hares, and sand grouse. From thence we proceeded to a kloof, or ravine, between two extensive *copjes*. This was covered with tolerably stiff brush, and promised remarkably well; for, as we approached it, we not only saw a number of springbok, but a magnificent bull koodoo (whose horns would have been a fitting decoration for any nobleman's hall) bid us good-bye over an adjoining ridge. That our attendants thoroughly understood what they were about was amply proved by the careful and sportsmanlike manner in which they conducted the campaign. Having placed us each on the summit of some loose rocks that guarded the pass, only our servants remaining with their respective masters, the entire posse made a detour round one of the *copjes*, which brought them to the head of the ravine, the wind being at their backs, which would thus enable them to drive the game before them, and therefore right up to our position, we being to leeward.

Having some time to wait, I lit my pipe and took a quiet survey of the surroundings. They were indeed charming, the trees and grass being abundant and green from the dampness of the situation, while the rocks and boulders that overlooked the expanse of this miniature valley were of that soft reddish tinge that never fails to give a mellow, warm tint to the landscape. In the sky, with the exception of a few fleecy fragments, there was not what could properly be designated a cloud, and the sun, though bright, had not yet become sufficiently powerful to be objectionable. Moreover, there was just sufficient breeze stealing down the kloof to make outdoor exercise attractive. After being occupied for a quarter of an hour, or thereabouts, inhaling into my soul the beauties of the scene that surrounded me, and appreciating the enjoyable circumstances under which I witnessed them, I heard the preconcerted signal which was to announce that the beat had commenced; so forthwith my pipe went into my pocket, and all the attention of myself and boys was devoted to the object of our vigil.

Wild animals become wonderfully soon aware

when man intrudes into their haunts, particularly when he comes between the wind and their nobility ; the result was that before the beaters had been many minutes engaged in their occupation, the rocky cliffs that overhung the ravine, which previously appeared devoid of animal life, were now teeming with it. I saw several parties of klipspringers (*Oreotragus saltatrix*) going up the sides of the rocks and making a passage for themselves through and over such obstacles in their way that no other animal, if the chamois be excepted, could accomplish. The klipspringer is a sturdy little buck, robust and powerful in form, with a short and broad forehead, very tiny muzzle, and seldom exceeds twenty-two inches in height at the shoulder. The horns, which are little longer than a good-sized darning-needle, strike the sportsman as very absurd weapons of offence or defence ; but let the stranger corner one of them that has been wounded, and if he have an empty gun in his hand and be not gifted with wonderful agility, he will most assuredly wish himself out of that locality, for the klipspringer can use its tiny prongs with such effect that it has been known frequently to beat off the tiger-cat, and, rumour says, even

the leopard. The back of the klipspringer, which is of an olive-brown colour, gradually becomes lighter down the flank till the stomach is reached, when the colour is of an ashy gray, the whole so wonderfully blending with the surroundings of its habitat that it requires the most experienced eye to detect this antelope among the rocks. I was most anxious to get two of these buck, as their hair, which is brittle and twisted, makes incomparably the best stuffing for a saddle that can anywhere be obtained. On such an occasion as the present I did not expect to succeed in my desire, for these beauties will not be driven, but invariably break off to the right or left flank. Scarcely had the klipspringers made their appearance, when numerous families of baboons followed their example and took to the rocks, the females, with their young, leading the way, the old males bringing up the rear, their extraordinary instinct telling them that that was the place of danger. I acknowledge that baboons are far from pretty animals, yet they have some wonderfully good points in their characters, the most marked of which is the pluck and determination with which they will meet any foe that attempts to molest

either the juveniles or ladies of their families. I confess, too, that I possess a great liking for baboons, and thus I was probably paying more attention to them than circumstances justified me in doing, when my boy touched my elbow and pointed downwards to the open space in front of my position ; but he was too late in calling my attention, for I had only sufficient time to see a steinbok go full pelt out of range, and two duikers dive into the brush that margined the watercourse. However, these were only the advance guard of a numerous contingent that was to follow. My friend, who was opposite, and about 150 yards from my post, now commenced shooting, and for some minutes his fusillade was equal to that enjoyed among the pheasants when the gunner is placed in the familiar "hot corner." However, my turn had come, so for the time being I will treat of my own performances.

A brace of steinbok showed themselves, and seemed to hesitate for a moment whether they would make a run for it ; at length they mustered up courage, and the two beauties started across the open at racing pace. I give each a barrel, the first dropping the game in its tracks, the second bringing

the quarry to the ground, which as rapidly recovered itself, and was immediately afterwards lost to view.

Next an old buck duiker thrust out his head from under a bush, stuck his nose into the air, sniffed for a minute, and not being quite satisfied, wheeled round rapidly and disappeared in the direction from whence he had come. But the beaters were now within 200 yards of his position, so he had no alternative but to face them or the space commanded by my rifle. The latter course he selected, so with cautious, mincing step he came forth and revealed himself. This hesitation sealed his doom, for in a moment afterwards I sent an Express bullet through his shoulder. The game now came faster than I could load for, hares, partridges, and guinea-fowl being abundantly interspersed with buck. The first three mentioned I allowed to go scatheless, for the simple reason that I had no other alternative, my weapon being entirely unsuited for such small fry. However, I brought down a brace more steinbok and another duiker, making more misses than hits. By this time the Kaffirs were near the end of the covert, when out bounded a large caraçal (*Felis caraçal*), which "Chummy" and self both shot at, and

he finally stopped with his last barrel. Next came a venerable *vlakke-vark* (*Phacochærus Africanus*), sometimes called warts hog, which instantly got greeted with both barrels, either of which, I believe, should have stopped him; but no, nothing of the kind. These old boars have as much vitality in them as the proverbial cat with nine lives. From the waddle in his gait I knew he would not travel far; still, he might require a lot of shooting before he made pork. The beaters were by this time almost out of covert, and I had already risen from my post to descend into the hollow, when out came a rum one—the strangest-looking beast in figure and action that mortal man ever looked at. But for its solidity and heaviness of carcase it might almost be said to trundle along like a hoop, deviating neither to the right nor the left, but going steadily straight on end, with that persistent air that would, doubtless, take it through a barn door, or any similar obstacle that should be in its way. The right barrel hit it hard, the left one did ditto, and still the brute went forward with an air of “what’s the odds as long as you are happy?” My companion, who, in the meantime, had approached, took a shot at short range, and the uncouth brute

surrendered life without a struggle. This animal is the *aard-vark*, or great ant-eater, which is always regarded as strictly nocturnal in its habits, and, therefore, creates no small amount of wonderment in the minds of both, as to what should be the reason that he is not at home in his burrow when the sun is so high in the heavens. A close examination of the carcass told the story. In his snout were found several punctures, in one of which adhered a porcupine's quill. This was sufficient for the beaters; that one spine in a moment told them the whole tale, for with the habits of the animals of their own country they are as conversant as School Board children are with their alphabet. One of the head men therefore explained to me that, while the *aard-vark* was abroad last night seeking for his food, a porcupine had taken possession of his home, and, instead of turning out, as an intruder of an honest turn of mind should have done when the legitimate proprietor returned, refused to vacate the warm nest he had stolen into, thus proving that there are other animals than human ones which consider possession nine points of the law.

Thus the poor *aard-vark* had to sleep where he

could, till the porcupine got hungry and had to come forth to satisfy his appetite, when the legal proprietor would be able to re-establish himself in his own domicile.

This is a painful story, for it teaches that there are rogues among beasts as there are among men, and most unmitigated scoundrels, too; for here is an instance of an honest ant-eater returning to his home to find it occupied, and a spine as large as a goose's quill stuck in his nose because he remonstrated; but the mischief does not terminate here, for the porcupine having abdicated, and the original possessor being re-established, it is more than doubtful if he dare go abroad that night to get his dinner, and so had to go hungry to bed, for the reason that if he did so, on his return he might again find his *lares* and *penates* in the possession of the stranger.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNKIND TREATMENT.

Attacked by a Vlakke-vark—Wait-a-bit Thorn.

I HAVE heard it said that "men are often unjust to one another, women always so," but I am certain they cannot be more so than the porcupine is to the aard-vark. Moreover, but for the presumption and barefaced cheek of the prickly, irascible animal in question, the poor creature he had so summarily turned from his home would be like "he who runs away, lives to fight another day," and be now alive. The aard-vark possesses extraordinary power in its muscles and claws; its fore-arms have but to be examined to prove that this is the case; but even that proof becomes doubly convincing when the ant-hills that it demolishes are examined. In portions of South Africa, more particularly in the Orange Free State, Southern Transvaal and parts of Natal



ANT-BEAR, OR AARD-VARK (*Orycteropus capensis*).

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and Zululand, ant-hills will be found all over the country, frequently not as much as fifty yards apart. These structures in this part of the country are often quite three feet high, with a diameter at their base of seven or eight feet; and so hard are they that it is not uncommon for a lightly loaded wagon to pass over them without breaking their surface: but this ant-eater in ten minutes' labour will make a hole in them large enough to bury an ordinary terrier in. When the retreats of the insect inhabitants are thus laid bare, their enemy places his long and slimy tongue over the principal thoroughfares, and when that member is covered with prey the mass of life is drawn in and rapidly devoured.

The flesh of this ant-eater is exceedingly good eating, resembling young pork in both appearance and taste, and is consequently eagerly sought after by the Bechuanas; for that reason, if for no other, it deserves a place among the game of their habitat.

Of one thing I would warn the inexperienced: handle it and the pangolin, when dead, as little as possible until they have been scalded, or submitted to a good singeing, for they both possess innumerable parasites, which have the bad, or good taste,

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to attach themselves to the human family when opportunity offers, and are as difficult to get rid of as they are easy to acquire.

A hot bath, in which plenty of carbolic soap has been dissolved, will cure this evil, so the traveller will know what to make use of to free himself from these irritating pests, if at any time he should have to handle these curiosities of the animal creation (not the insects), with a desire to bring one or other of them alive to his native land.

The aard-vark we had killed measured (of course including tail) nearly seven feet in length, and when it was slung upon a pole for transportation to camp it was quite a load for two able-bodied Bakalihari. Although this animal is remarkably timid, and thus seldom seen, if it should be intercepted in retreat to its earth, or taken by surprise, and so compelled to defend itself, it will do so most gallantly, against any odds. Woe betide the cur then, that thoughtlessly places itself within reach of its formidable claws, for they have quite as much the power of cutting as have the tusks of a wild boar.

Having seen the ant-eater forwarded to camp, "Chummy" and self, with three of the natives, started

to hunt up the steinbuck that had been wounded early in the drive, as we believed it could not go far, reserving the death of the hog for a later performance. The bush we found a tolerably thick tangle of dwarf shrubs, interspersed with a good many trees, few of which exceeded twenty feet in height; and but for the numerous runs, or game-paths, we should have found what we had undertaken, viz., threading this maze, no easy task, more especially as "wait-a-bit" thorns formed no inconsiderable portion of the impediments. A patriarchal gray-beard of the tribe, as spoorer, led the way; his two sons, great, powerful, mature men, brought up the rear. For this service I had promised the family the entire carcase, for, without doing so, they would not have now aided us; for already the rest of the party were smoking their loved *daha* (keef of the Moors, a description of wild hemp),* and so expressed disinclination for further exercise, on the plea that an abundance of animal food had been already obtained.

* I would call the attention of readers to this strange and interesting fact, viz., the inhabitants of the extreme North and South of Africa use in the same manner this weed, a proof, I think, that at some period they must have had intercourse with each other.

Such conduct is the greatest obstacle to sport in this country. It matters not how well you pay these worthies, like the lower classes of Irish, work they will not, unless upon an empty stomach. However, there is one fortunate weakness they possess, which obviates this difficulty: whenever they obtain the wherewithal to gormandise, they will not cease gorging till all is finished, when labour must follow to obtain a fresh supply.

Well! grand Seigneur Graybeard led the way, we following close behind, anxiously and attentively watching every movement of the old man's hands, and expecting momentarily an indication that our services were required in the front, when, *mirabile dictu*, the aged warrior sprang at least four feet in the air. I saw something big and grizzly between his legs, and at once comprehended that, instead of being the assailants, we had been attacked, and that the enemy was a vlakke-varck. Shoot, under the circumstances, I could not, without endangering the old man's life, so I sprang on one side, and, as luck would have it, into a perfect tangle of wait-a-bit thorns. It was fortunate that I was not at the moment asked to go further, for that I could not

have done, being as thoroughly tied up by these confounded creepers as ever was one of the Davenport brothers supposed to be, when knotted up by a knowing old "salt." Convinced that the danger was over, and that the hog had passed on, I slewed myself round to find how it had fared with "Chummy." I was scarcely in a laughing humour at the time, for I deemed that I had had a very narrow escape from getting ripped; still, I could not suppress a giggle on witnessing what I saw, for my friend was hanging by his hands to a bough, with his knees as near to his chin as his knowledge of gymnastics enabled him to bring them, while his countenance bore an expression of extreme disgust at being forced into the performance of such violent exercise, and by compulsion occupying such an undignified position. Beyond my companion, but near at hand, was one of the darkies, perched on the top of a big bush, and, further on, the other one, fleeing, evidently in search of a similar sanctuary. Tableau: Five good men and true routed by a wartz-hog.

"Why didn't you shoot him?" exclaimed Chummy to me, as he straightened himself, and then dropped to the ground.

"Because I thought I might hit the old man. Why didn't you?"

"Because I thought I'd hit you."

So we both laughed over the absurdity of the whole affair, and at the beaters' discomfiture, and there and then pitched into them, like considerate white men, for their want of pluck and the facility with which they could be put to flight.

It was well for all parties that this vlakke-vark was the one that had been so severely wounded a short time previously. If such had not been the case, I have little doubt that some of us would have had to indent heavily on the medicine chest for diachylon plaster. But I am going the pace too fast, for I am still bound literally "neck and crop" with the wait-a-bits, and no easy matter had I to release myself; in fact, I almost doubt whether I could have done so but for the assistance of my hunting-knife, for the moment you move to disengage yourself from the thorns of one tendril those of another are sure to lay hold of you.

The wait-a-bit, or *wacht-an-bechee* of the Boers, deserves a word of notice, for its name occurs in every book of travel that treats of South Africa. It is a long, thin, green climber, belonging to the acacia

family, the tendrils of which are frequently no thicker than ordinary whipcord, and not unfrequently extend many yards from the roots. Every six or eight inches, and close to where the leaves are thrown out, are to be found two thorns, the upper one straight, the lower one curved like a fish-hook. This arrangement is formidable enough, in all conscience; but the same diabolical combination exists on the other side of the tendril, which, by the way, is as tough to break as a piece of salmon gut. Thus, if you happen to be caught by the thorns on one side and you pull against them, those on the reverse side will turn round and assist their brethren. So the more you haul, pull, and especially jerk yourself to get free, the firmer will you become bound.

“All’s well that ends well.” Nobody being injured, we continued our search for the steinbuck, which, in a short distance, we found lying across the path, dead. These little beauties are certainly the perfection of form and shape. I never kill them without regret; but justify my conduct in doing so with the belief, that they were intended for man’s food, and so resolve that to no other purpose shall their bodies be applied.

However, we have to settle accounts with the vlakke-vark, and that promptly, if for no other reason than to provide a solatium to the wounded pride of all our party. We therefore return to the idle beaters to obtain their co-operation, as well as the service of a couple of curs that were with them.

These people are natural orators. "The aged one," with fluency, fire, and grand declamatory action, described what had taken place. He showed most graphically to the audience how he had jumped into the air, how I had got tied up, how "Chummy" hung from a branch, how one of his sons had got on to a bush and the other one bolted, and as he came to each different scene of the narrative, he pointed out the persons that had played the principal part in their respective rôles, and then appealed to his audience for aid. This oratorical effort had the desired result, for the response was an offer of service from at least a dozen stalwart volunteers.

CHAPTER XX

UNATTRACTIVE MORTALITY.

The Vlakke-varke's Home—Game to the Last—Ugly Imps.

Two miserable starved dogs accompanied the reinforcement, and we, of course, went to see the fun which was confidently expected, as the dusky hunters were armed solely with assegais.

The wild boar has been speared on foot in India, I am aware, but such instances are so few and wide apart, that the *rencontre* is marked down in the sportsman's memory as an event always to be remembered. But in South Africa, to kill either the bosch-varke or vlakke-varke with the assegai is almost a daily occurrence. An Indian shikari will smile with derision when I compare, in a sporting sense, the representatives of the pig race in both continents. "Every crow thinks its own young one the whitest." I know both animals well, and I unhesitatingly say that African

hogs are quite as dangerous as those of India, being equal in speed, activity, and courage. The reason it has not been made a practice by Europeans in Africa to ride down and spear these animals, doubtless is, that they are seldom found in galloping ground; and, further, when they are hard pressed, they go to earth. To see these beasts do this last performance is wonderful. The brute, when pursued, rushes to its burrow, on reaching which, without an apparent halt, it turns round, as if on a pivot, and backs into the ground. I believe, and have been told, that unless it did this, it would be unable to turn round to come out again, on account of its rotundity of figure; and as the holes they take shelter in are apparently small for the purpose to which they are devoted, the above supposition has evidently good grounds for being accepted as correct.

The burrows occupied by the vlakke-vark are not of their own construction, but made by the ant-eater originally, though probably enlarged by the new tenant, for in these earths the sows produce their young, rear them, and ultimately remain there domiciled, until the family gets broken up by the course of events.

On account of the hardness of the surface of the

various game-paths that ran through the bush, we were a long time before we could discover the spoor of our late enemy, and when we did the curs refused to acknowledge it, possibly on account of the dryness of the soil and the heat of the day, which had already become quite overpowering. Nevertheless, the beaters indefatigably continued their search, doubtless seeing *in futuram* the prospect of grilled pork-chops—savoury morsels, I can assure the reader, when cooked over a clear wood fire. The skill of these men in tracking game I have previously noticed as something wonderful, far surpassing Indian red man or Oriental *chicaree*, and in this instance they afforded us a specimen of their superlative talent.

The examination of the surface of the ground, finally led us to the almost dry river-bed; on its margin was a mud-bank, without water flowing over it, but still damp; its surface told the tale, as plain as words could speak it or pen write it, viz. that Master Piggy had passed that way. The spoor was irregular in line and of unequal depth, showing but too truly that the poor beast was hard stricken. Following this for a hundred yards, it left the river bed, and here the curs for the first time commenced

to show that they took some interest in our occupation, for both, after nosing about as if their curiosity had been excited, went to the front and disappeared into the adjacent covert. Tracking here became impossible, so there was nothing for it but to wait for the dogs to give indication that they had found the game, which every one of the natives, judging from the expectant expression of their countenances, confidently hoped they would do.

In a few minutes a whimper was heard, soon after several, and then the curs opened up a chorus in grand style. At this signal off went the darkies to their dogs as fast as their legs could carry them, heedless alike of brush and thorn. I never pretended to be much of a runner myself, so soon was out of the crowd; but "Chummy," who deems himself "some pumpkins" in this description of manly exercise, nevertheless did not get so far in front of me as to prevent my availing myself of the openings made through the bush by his stalwart figure. It was desperately hot work, and in consequence I was perfectly bathed in perspiration, and my eyes almost blinded with sweat; still I pushed forward, determined, if possible, to see or assist at the death of the plucky old boar.

The noise of the rapid advance of the natives, the incessant yelping of the curs around the quarry, and not improbably the effect of the wound the beast had received, had made him take shelter in a hollow, undermined out of the bank by the wash of the stream, in some former flood. The space around the shelter he had selected was clear from undergrowth, but some intervening earth which had fallen from the overhanging bank entirely prevented myself or my friend obtaining a shot. The natives shouted to their dogs to encourage them, but were extremely guarded at first in exposing themselves to a possible attack; delay, however, appeared to increase their confidence, so, closer and closer they approached the game's hiding-place. At length delay made them reckless, under the impression, possibly, that the hog was by this time so stiffened by his wound as to be incapable of becoming the aggressor; but they had calculated without their host. A powerful young man, whom I had noticed in the morning take a most active part among the beaters, now came to the front, and, assegai in hand, walked directly up to the entrance of the hollow where the pig was supposed to be. Supposed to be! Phew! there was no longer supposition, for out he came like a dart, every bristle erect, and vindictive hate flashing

from his pigmy eyes, but not too quick for the native to deliver his weapon, turn on his heel, and spring out of the way. The impetus of the boar carried him at least twenty yards before he pulled up ; and this halt, I am disposed to think, was forced upon him through the shaft of the assegai catching on the ground, and thus driving the head of the spear farther into his carcase. Poor wretch, it was easy to see that his days were numbered, but, game to the last, he turned his head and bit off the stem of the cruel blade close to his now heaving side. That movement was his death-warrant ; every one of his destroyers in an instant drew round him, and neither knowing where to fly, nor whom to attack first, the gallant beast fell, pierced by nearly a dozen weapons.

Of course, both my friend and myself had abundant opportunities in which to have used our rifles ; but to see a wild boar speared on foot is not a sight to be witnessed by a white man every day. So we desisted, and right manfully and skilfully did his attackers perform their work. No doubt many will say, who chance to read this, had not the boar been wounded, such a successful issue would not have been obtained. In this I cannot agree, for the quarry came

forth apparently as fresh and anxious for the encounter as any animal could have done ; so in my belief an unwounded hog would in the same manner have received the first assegai, and on the skill with which it was thrust depended the whole result.

Being too exhausted for further exercise, we all started off for some adjoining pits, where the horses had been ordered to meet us. Here we met the whole crew of our beaters assembled, and with them many women and children, whose delight at inspecting the veteran boar, and handling his formidable tusks, is easier to imagine than describe. These little imps are wonderfully precocious, but attractively so, and quite as clever as their parents in expressing themselves by signs, and, but that they are as a rule so fearfully ugly and cursed with such protruding abdomens, they would make rather interesting pets. Frank Buckland (not the auctioneer) would, I believe, almost have given his life for one, for his greatest hankering was ever after monstrosities.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CHARMING COUNTRY.

Indigenous Flowers—Songs of War and Love—A Wise Goat.

WHEN seated at the pits just mentioned, enjoying the antics of these embryo men and women, four strangers joined us, who had a long and rather angry controversy with the heads of our party. I was most anxious to learn the purport of their conversation, but my Tottie refused to gratify my curiosity until he had learned further of it. The energy of the disputants, and the vehemence with which they addressed one another, was worthy of a Home Rule debate, when a certain Irish member I wot of, has the floor, or almost as forcibly reminded me of such scenes as I have witnessed in the Levant, or even at Nix Mangare Stairs, Malta, as to who should possess a copper that had been thrown among the crowd. At one moment you confidently expect to see each

belabouring his neighbour or, possibly, giving him a taste of cold steel, for an Anglo-Saxon cannot imagine such an amount of energy got up for any purpose in which life and limb are not concerned. But the most remarkable thing of all is, as soon as their differences are settled, each and every one appears disposed to caress, even kiss, his former enemy. So it was with these people around me; and what would you suppose the dispute was about? The new arrivals had got two young caraçals for sale, and were disposed to take a price for them which my friends deemed quite inadequate in payment for such treasures, and on that account were browbeating the new-comers so as to force them to squeeze the white man. Uneducated and unsophisticated as these people are, still they are wonderfully sharp in making bargains themselves, or in assisting others to do so; when the latter is the case they take precious good care to see that the vendor pays a heavy commission for the service rendered.

“These people require a deal of protection from the dishonest white man,” so said a missionary once to me. Indeed! Bosh! Such is a good song for some of our philanthropists to sing, but the boot

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is in reality upon the other foot ; for no one, if we except a Whitechapel Jew, a Greek, or a Scotchman, would have any chance of holding his own with these aborigines in a trade. Our ride to the wagons took us between numerous *coppjes*, with large timber growing in groups upon them, the intermediate ground being generally fair grazing land. Nor are flowers wanting to give a charm to the landscape. The most remarkable of these is the flowering aloe, whose brilliancy of colour is most striking. They are generally to be found in some rocky, isolated position, as if keeping watch and ward over the country ; while close to them, often in their immediate vicinity, curious-looking euphorbias rear their heads. In the grasses, on the more level ground, the eye frequently rested on the lobelia, while heliotrope and the flowering verbena are in such profusion that I doubt not that the horses crushed quantities of them every few paces ; but their scent is sadly deficient in comparison to their English congeners. When there is more moisture in the soil than at present the floral exhibition doubtless will be much finer ; but the land, as it is now, affords abundant proof what a fine pasture country this might become with a little care.

On our way we passed several troops of baboons, several of which took very little trouble to get out of our way, some going so far as to let us come within thirty or forty paces before they left our intended course. The natives, even among the mature men, I have noticed have a considerable fear of these animals, although I believe that, unless molested, they are perfectly harmless to human beings. No greater insult can be offered a Kaffir than to tell him that he resembled a baboon. However, such a simile might not be pleasing to a white man.

That evening we had in camp a grand show of game and a big assortment of natives. It is doubtful which afforded the greatest amount of contemplation. If the study were intended to be of an agreeable nature, then I should select the former.

When I resided among the North American Indians, I had a great liking for gazing on a dusky, taciturn, hulking Sioux brave, or a more sprightly and active Blackfoot; it also affords me much pleasure to watch the Bechuanas at their ordinary avocations, but I dislike to see any of these aborigines feed, for, when gratifying their hunger, they show more selfish-

ness and certainly much less grace than the brute creation do when so employed.

The caraçal killed in the morning was a fine adult male specimen, with a most perfect coat, which I soon had the carcase divested of, for it, with that of the gray, or *narwal* jackal, form the warmest and softest karosses obtained from the skins of any animals to be found on the tropical South African hunting *veldt*. However, they are more susceptible of injury from damp or wet than any of the furs I know, thus do not repay the trouble of bringing home, unless the possessor designs to exhibit them as trophies.

The caraçal lives principally upon small buck, which it is very successful in hunting; in fact, there are no animals I wot of that are more thorough sportsmen in all their proclivities. However, they do not hesitate to pick up a pauw or kooran when opportunity offers, and the velocity with which they make their dash upon these birds is equal to that of the Indian cheetah.

It is a very extraordinary thing that, although they will frequently go off with the most fearful shot or bullet wound, a very insignificant blow from a stick

across the loins will instantly disable them. The same is the case with their congener on the American continent, the Canadian lynx, or *peeshoo*.

I thoroughly believe that the superabundance of meat in a camp has the same effect upon the tribes of the interior of Africa, that an excess of spirituous liquor has upon white men, for both appear to equally set the tongue going and predispose the indulgers to late hours. Without calling the Bechuanas a musical people, still they are not entirely without a knowledge of symphony; thus many of their melodies are sweet and plaintive, with stirring choruses in which all join, that could scarcely be excelled anywhere, for the perfect time in which they are chanted.

Songs of war, and also of the chase, are in great repute amongst them, the exciting parts of which are delivered with great pantomimic and declamatory action, each verse finishing with a unity of voices not unfrequently of such power as to make the rocks and kloofs re-echo. The grand period at which to hear these musical displays is on the advent of a new moon, and for several nights after its appearance. On these occasions the dusky ladies

of the kraal honour these convivial assemblies, and with flashing eyes and clapping hands exhibit, with inexpressible *empressement*, the enjoyment they derive from being present at their *réunions*.

There is in common use among these people a peculiar musical instrument, which, in the hands of a skilful player, produces many soft and harmonious notes ; herd-boys appear to be particularly conversant with its use, and often, when over half-a-mile from where the player was situated, I have heard it distinctly. On such occasions, mellow as this music may be when close at hand, distance seems to refine it to such an exquisite quality that, if the listener be at all superstitious or imaginative he might well attribute its production to the skill of a fairy. This instrument is simply a bow about two and a half feet long, which is strung sufficiently tight to permit great reverberation of the string. One end of the wood is held between the teeth, the left hand steady-ing it about the middle, while the fingers of the right hand touch the chord slowly and at different distances from the performer's mouth.

At first, when I visited this hunter's arcadia, the music accompanying these social meetings kept me

awake, but use soon caused me to disregard it, and therefore sleep soundly throughout the most festive assemblies. Furthermore, if the traveller be not of an irascible disposition, I would advise him by all means to encourage these social gatherings, for they tend to make his followers happy and contented, as well as doing much to prevent the onslaughts of wild animals, as the smaller skulking fraternity—yes! and even the larger—are aware that there are too many wakeful persons about for them successfully to carry on their avocation when the musical mania is in full swing.

When travelling up country a few years ago, I made a considerable proportion of my journey in the society of one of the oldest, best known, and most popular traders of the interior. He had a pet goat which had been his constant companion for ten years on these dangerous expeditions. Experiences such as had been gained by this animal had made it wonderfully wide awake to the dangers that surrounded it on every hand, particularly after dark. Thus, after the sun had gone down, nothing on earth would have tempted Billy from his master's side, or the immediate vicinity of the wagons, on the forebox

of one of which he always slept. But when these fandangoes were going on amongst the natives, Master Billy would double his legs under him, and remain all night perfectly happy and contented among the revellers, as if no such thing as jackals, hyenas, and caraçals existed in this part of the earth. The very cuteness of the character of this goat deserves more notice than I should feel disposed to bestow upon an ordinary animal. When trekking, if the country was open, he would follow the wagons forty, or even fifty yards behind, provided always he had a number of dogs on each side of him. If brush, that was dense, had to be passed through, the place of security he then considered best, was immediately between the hind wheels; but if an alarm was given, the wagon-box, in an instant, became his perch, which he would gain, whether the vehicle was in motion or not, by a single spring, quite astonishing to the beholder to see a beast of such rotund proportions capable of making. I have said he slept on the wagon-box, but this was only when marauders were not about, for if he got a sniff of one of the *carnivoræ* out on the prowl, with one rush he dived into the wagon and, apparently, did not consider

himself safe until he was on the top of his owner's bed. The master of this animal told me that he would not have taken £100 for him, as he had never made a trip into the interior in which Billy had not saved him twice that amount of money by warning him that his oxen and horses were in danger from lions.

I always provided myself with a pet goat, and found it infinitely more watchful than dogs, its only rival in this excellent quality being a baboon. Somehow, however, my goats invariably came to grief, sooner or later. I suppose this resulted from their being too young when taken into the dangerous country. They can, however, easily be replaced, as nearly all the Bush people possess herds of them, and a cup of trade gunpowder is generally considered sufficient compensation for your selection of the best of a flock. Thus much has been said about goats, as I should advise every hunter to take one with him on an excursion into the interior of this country; for, independent of their services as watchmen during the night, their antics, quaint ways, and excessive selfishness of character will help to while away the tedium of many a monotonous hour.

The men previously alluded to who had the young caraçals to dispose of, seemed anxious to come to terms with me for their sale. This no doubt arose from the fact that I treated their presence with perfect indifference, and without expressing a desire to become possessed of their treasures. So on the following afternoon, while I was busily employed washing out the dirty clothes, they seated themselves beside the tub. After turning my back upon them about a dozen times, and their changing their position as frequently to avoid being offered this indignity, they broached to me the subject of their visit. After considerable haggling, I agreed to pay them an old jersey, a pound of tobacco, and a cup of gunpowder on delivery of the young beasts in camp. The remuneration was evidently satisfactory; but still there was a hitch, which ultimately, I was informed, resolved itself into the fact that the cubs had not yet been caught. The Bushmen, however, knew where they were, and had a firm belief that they could capture them, and that there would be little risk in doing so, as the caraçal which had been shot the previous morning they thought was the sire of the proposed objects of barter. But, for all this explanation, I preferred

retaining my goods to parting with them upon such doubtful security.

This decision greatly depressed the spirits of my visitors ; so, as they were really civil enough fellows, and possibly meant honestly, I ultimately agreed to pay them the stipulated price provided they allowed me to accompany them when the capture was made. So the following afternoon I met them at their kraal, from whence we proceeded to a rocky *kloof* filled with small *krantzies* thickly covered with brush. In addition to our party was a small Kalihari Bush-boy, a perfect specimen of his race, for, although quite twelve years of age, his height did not exceed forty inches. Ugly he was unquestionably ; in fact, I doubt if it could be possible to find an uglier ; yet these people are such indefatigable hunters, such extraordinary spoorers, and possess such an intimate knowledge of the habits of all animals that frequent their country, united with an affection towards those who treat them kindly, that they cannot fail to be appreciated by the sportsman. After a tedious and exceedingly rough scramble the entrance to a cave was pointed out, the floor of which was covered with fine white sand. This tell-tale, upon inspection, showed

that one of the parent caraçals had but lately gone forth, so it was considered advisable that the young imp should immediately undertake the duty allotted to him, viz., playing the part of terrier. As there were known to be two other entrances to this den, which were separated from our present position by a considerable distance, it was arranged that I should keep guard where we then stood to obstruct the ingress of the absent parent, while the natives watched the remaining approaches. For this purpose they left me, affording me an opportunity to uninterruptedly admire Nature, and drink into my soul the glory and grandeur of the works of the Great Creator. The better to study, the better to think, I lit my pipe. Soother of all griefs, still I cannot help thinking that you are somewhat out of place between the lips of one whose entirety is struggling to teem with poetry and romance.

CHAPTER XXII.

PERSEVERANCE REWARDED.

A Brave Lad—An Unenviable Position—Rewarded with Success.

I DON'T think that there are many European boys who would have accepted the task of going in total darkness into the bowels of the earth, as this youth did, with possibly an infuriated beast at its termination. Yet he seemed to accept it all as a matter of course ; his manner, indeed, indicating that he enjoyed the undertaking as a deuced good lark. There is no accounting for taste, but I suppose that all depends upon education ; for if I missed the maternal parent, or she effected an entrance into the cavern by another route, it is scarcely to be doubted but that she would make it uncommonly hot for the intruder into the sanctity of her nursery.

Before the Bush-boy entered the den of the caraçal I was to receive a signal from the others,

notifying me that they had reached their respective posts. At length I heard the preconcerted whistle, and the boy, armed with nothing but the blade of an assegai and a worn-out *kaross*, which he dragged after him, disappeared into the bowels of the earth. This was not effected without many twists and contortions and an abundant use of his nails, with the employment of which he appeared almost as great an adept as an aard-vark ; for although a mature *caraçal* stands almost as high as a well-grown colley, like all the cat family, it possesses wonderful powers of compressing itself into a small space.

After the boy had been lost sight of, I could not help feeling that if anything happened to him I should have much to blame myself for ; but I consoled myself with the knowledge that I would zealously and truly perform my part, and that nothing living should pass me. I had time now to take close observation of my surroundings. Below me and to the right extended a wild rocky valley, while above and to the westward, commanding my position, was an elevated ridge, the surface of which, from its more exposed situation, was but sparsely covered with vegetation.

The silence of death reigned around, seldom

broken except by the mellow cooing of a dove or two beneath, or the occasional chatter of the beautiful bronze-green parroquets peculiar to this part of the world. The sun by this time was rapidly declining, and the *tout ensemble* formed a scene of loveliness that an admirer of Nature in its primitive state would have gone into ecstasies over.

This very absence of intrusion on my privacy, I suppose it was that caused me again and again to revert to the dangerous position the Bush-boy was in, if by any chance the female caraçal gained access to her children. Possibly fancy made me believe his position worse than it actually was, for in my mind I could see the naked youth fighting for life in a space so confined that his usual activity of body would be quite thrown away, and only armed with a weapon scarcely superior to an ordinary pocket-knife, while his arms would probably be so restricted as to render him unable to use them effectively.

During this rather unpleasant study, a shadow suddenly passed over me ; at first I thought it might have been caused by an *aas-vogel* (vulture), but as nothing, however trifling, must be disregarded in these maiden hunting lands, I raised my eyes cautiously

to learn the cause. For some minutes I could observe nothing; at length slowly I made out, to my astonishment, that not over twenty yards from me, on the western ridge, was to be seen the head and shoulders of a *caraçal*, with a kid in its mouth, obviously making inquiring observation of 'who and what was the intruder that dared to place himself at the entrance to its home.

Slowly I raised my rifle, and as I did so the object on which I was about to align my sight appeared to become more prominent. With the report came the thud, a sound indicative that the bullet had sped truly to its destination, and the quarry sprang into the air; in doing so it dropped its prey, and in a moment after the big cat had disappeared down the front of the slope into the thick bush that clothed the sides of the *kloof*.

The echoes that answered the shot from the adjoining rocks and *krantzes* had scarcely ceased to respond to my rifle's report, when my companions joined me. They knew well that I would not shoot except at the game expected, and, of course, thought that my aim had been successful; so when they did not find a dead *caraçal* they were much disappointed.

In total disregard of the Bush-boy's safety, possibly through thoughtlessness, we left the cave and the lad in it, and sought for the animal I had fired at. The reward was a mutilated kid, but not the corpse of its slayer, which carcase was recognised as the property of one of my associates.

There was grief in the hearts of my companions when they took its body up; for why? it was stated to be the flower of their flock, the apple of their eye, the child of their old age. I never thought adult human beings could be so upset by the death of a kid (for I have known people rejoice at the death of near relations), so I commenced to believe that these aborigines possessed feelings of affection infinitely stronger than did the children of civilisation, when lo! to my surprise, they threw the carcase brutally on one side, made several grimaces and as many pantomimic actions, pointed to some blood upon the herbage, and started down the *kloof* at a steady dog-trot.

Little cared they for the Bush-boy in the bowels of the earth. But to be charitable, possibly they knew better than I that the youth could take care of himself; so deserted him, confident in their belief. Not being so well informed on such matters I did not follow the example set me, but returned to my

relinquished post ; and, as night was rapidly approaching, and the foe that would have been dangerous to encounter driven off or killed, I did not hesitate to get on my knees and call upon the lad to come out as soon as possible.

"Ya, ya, Bass," I thought I heard him answer, but the sound appeared to come from so great a distance that I felt quite uncertain whether my ears informed me correctly. Like many another person under similar circumstances, however, I accepted the response as I wished it to be, so took a seat, again lit a pipe, and ardently wished that my term of "sentry-go" was over, and that I was on my way to camp, if not in it, for I commenced to yearn for some of the succulent food that I knew would be about ripe for feeding on at this hour.

My companions of the hunt, the fellows who had departed on the spoor, did not return. "No, no, the selfish beasts had gone home," I concluded; "what the deuce did they care about a white man being left out in the wilds all night? not a fig; not a con——;" there I stopped, for a voice informed me, a hollow, sepulchral voice: "All right, Bass, I have got them."

In a few minutes after, first one chocolate-coloured

leg, then a second, protruded from the hole, afterwards came successive parts of a carcase, and last a woolly head, in the teeth of which were firmly fixed the corners of the kaross, thus transforming into a bag this well-worn, greasy garment, and in its depths obviously struggled something possessed of life. With alacrity I helped the apparition to his feet, hurriedly released him from his load, and opened it, when, to my joy, I found the cubs inside, but, alas! one was dead, smothered, the other *in extremis*.

In my younger days, at the time when I wore the livery of our gracious Majesty, I have known divine creatures, generally those whose age was doubtful, with whom one of our fellows, possibly myself, had lately waltzed, get overcome and faint; so had learned that nothing, under such circumstances, was so likely to bring them round as fanning, or, let me recall the experiences of those days, stiff brandy and water, if procurable; thus, having none of the latter, I adopted the former curative to resuscitate the juvenile caraçal. As I had found the benefit of this restorative in days gone by, so I found it now; the young cat gasped a little first, then uttered some inarticulate expressions, and soon

after became conscious of its worldly surroundings ; in proof of which I received a gentle reminder in the shape of a severe bite and elongated scratch, to evince that the object of all my solicitude still possessed teeth and claws, and knew how to use them.

It was so nearly dark now that it behoved me to make an immediate start, or else the prospects were, that I should not get out of the *kloof* that night, much less regain my wagons, so the lad shouldered the kid, while I took young "spitfire" under my special care. That boy was a wonder of gentleness, kindness, and forethought, for not a stone, shrub, or briar obstructed my path but he warned me of, or removed ; so, safe in limb and skin, I reached home about three hours after sundown, my prize having endured the journey quite as well as its bearer, that is, if an opinion can be formed from the vindictive manner with which it spat at "Chummy" when he attempted to caress it, although he continued to repeat, in most endearing tones, those soothing words, "Poor wee beastie, poor wee beastie."

Like a good, kind, thoughtful pal, as he ever was, he had not forgotten that I was mortal, so

had an abundant supply of all that was needful ready to gratify my hunger, and it took me but short time to satisfy that importunate enemy. Still, before I had done so, the comrades of my day's adventure brought in the mamma of young spitfire. She was found dead some distance up the *kloof*, but instead of returning to me when they had recovered the carcase, Bechuana-like, the fellows took it to their kraal for exhibition, and doubtless over it, expatiated before admiring wives and sweethearts upon the wonderful deeds they had performed in accomplishing her destruction. I was about to open out upon them in rather forcible language, severely expressive of my indignation at their leaving me alone to find my way home, when, to the surprise of both "Chummy" and self, a heavy shot was heard from the adjoining *coppie*. In a moment every native was on his feet, and rushed off to the scene of the explosion. Not a soul was left to give an explanation of this exodus except that greasy, over-fed rascal Cookey, for gluttony had rendered him obese, and obesity does not produce a desire for violent exercise. For a time he refused an explanation. At length his lordship was pleased to inform us

that my driver had set a gun for a wolf (hyena). As this mode of killing game more often fails than succeeds, we were not a little surprised to see the deserters return with a leopard.

In the morning I had a duty to perform far from unpleasant, viz., to despatch a messenger to my old and tried hunting companion, Cigar, to inform him that I had thus far advanced into the country, and intended immediately starting for Honey vley, where I hoped he would join me. This plan I pursued in consequence of an arrangement entered into with him a couple of years previously. As Cigar's name in my future narrative will not unfrequently occur, I may at once state that he was, without exception, the best native sportsman I ever met with in my numerous and varied wanderings. As a shot at game he was equal to any white man; as a spoorer no Bushman could surpass him. A Hottentot by birth, he had passed his early years in the colony, and in boyhood had been attached to a racing stable, where he had learnt to ride—not simply to sit on a horse's back as successful pawnbrokers or stockbrokers do in Hyde Park, but unerringly to pilot a second-rate horse, leader to the winning-post. I am sorry to say, however, that this



THE LEOPARD (*Felis pardus*).

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mighty Nimrod was not generally popular amongst white men ; but the fault was not his. Thus the missionaries objected to him because he refused to be converted, or even, more important still in their eyes, to profess that he was ; the traders disliked him, because he declined to work for them, at any of the numerous crafts he was acquainted with, for smaller wages than were paid to colonial or European artisans. If I had believed all that was told to me in depreciation of this man's character I never should have known him ; but, with a spirit of independence, and a resolution to learn for myself this Hottentot's character, I gave him a trial, and never regretted having done so. True, he was the coffee colour of his race, and his head was ornamented with innumerable peppercorns of wool, while his cheekbones were high, his nose flat, and the white of the eyes stained to a muddy tinge, all of which peculiarities the reader will allow detract much from a human being's personal appearance. Still, saddled as he was with all these unprepossessing insignia of his race, I never in my life encountered a braver, truer, or more devoted friend. By this panegyric I do not mean to say that Cigar was faultless ; but his error

alone injured himself, which was, an excessive attachment to intoxicants. When we were in the veldt, however, he was unable to gratify his cravings for the demon, spirits, so that it seldom happened that I saw him under its influence.

I had for some time looked forward to Cigar joining me, and now that I had reached the country in which I might at any moment encounter large game, I did not feel disposed to defer sending him the necessary information, that I was so close at hand. So, armed with a split stick, in which was fastened a letter, and provided with a small sum of money to liquidate any trifling debt that the Hottentot might owe to his adjoining trader, I started off a runner with orders to make a speedy journey, and not to presume to again look me in the face unless the redoubted Cigar was with him.

This runner had 130 miles to travel before performing my commission, yet he trotted off on his errand as good-naturedly, as if about to carry a note to a neighbour's farm not more than a few miles distant. If nothing occurred to impede this messenger, I confidently expected to see him back in seven days; good travelling, all must agree with me, for a person not in training.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MUTINOUS SCOUNDREL.

African Leopards—Cookey Again—A Knock Down.

THE leopard killed last night was a small female that had just reached maturity. She was well nourished, and possessed of a beautiful hide, the orange-tawny ground, being particularly dark and brilliant, while the sable spots, in shape like large pansy flowers, were, except in their centre, as black as jet could be. This decided contrast is ever indicative of youth, whereas a tendency of the respective colours to blend, denotes the reverse.

I am decidedly of opinion that there are two, if not three, distinct species of leopard in South Africa, among which I do not include the hunting leopard, or cheetah, which I am disposed to think possesses more of the characteristics of the dog than of the cat family. The subdivisions that I make in the group

of *Felis pardus* are the mountain dwellers and those that are found upon the lowlands. The first mentioned is a much shorter-legged animal than the latter, and seldom exceeds the length, including the tail, of six feet. Its limbs are possessed of extraordinary power and development, and its courage, more especially when wounded, is not to be surpassed; in fact, its capacity of doing injury to a foe is quite equal to that of the larger *felidæ*. Its mode of attack has been frequently described to me, and my own experience endorses it, viz., when its enemy is within springing distance it charges with incredible velocity, and on reaching its molester, seizes him about the shoulders with its formidable claws, at the same time commencing to rend his face and neck with its powerful teeth. Moreover, like the smaller cats, it does not hesitate to use its hind legs as further auxiliaries to its destructive powers, tearing and lacerating with them the abdomen and thighs of its victims.

From the diminutive size of the mountain leopard, a casual observer would be inclined to imagine that two or three good dogs would be more than a match for it; but this is not the case, for, unaided, I believe this animal would be more than

equal to double that number of the most powerful hounds I have ever seen. Small bok, dogs, goats, and pigs are its favourite prey, but it is not choice in its dietary, for poultry, wild fowl, and even porcupines are frequently utilised for its repast. During the day it may frequently be found sunning itself upon some cliff or table rock adjoining its den, but night is the time that it devotes to hunting, when it will fearlessly approach the residence of the farmers or kraal of the natives, and by the very sudden and unexpected nature of its descent succeed in carrying off its booty.

Poison of late years has been very successfully employed to thin the numbers of many of the *carnivoræ*, but with the leopard, it has not been so fortunate; this I account for, as it is very seldom a carrion feeder. Even now, at the present day, this animal is not unknown in the vicinity of Cape Town, and is still to be found in considerable numbers in the neighbourhood of the mysterious-looking range of mountains, the Hottentot Hollands and many of its adjacent spurs.

The other leopard, which is a much larger animal than that previously described, is at once distinguishable from it, by standing higher—more erect upon its

legs, which do not appear to be so muscular in their development. Seven feet six inches, inclusive of tail, is about its length, although a few have been killed exceeding this measurement, for I obtained one in the Makalaka country which was at least a foot longer. The favourite haunts of this beast are the rush-grown and grassy edges of *vleys* and rivers, or the dense jungles of the country adjoining the eastern coast. In this selection of hunting grounds it has much similarity to the lion, which it also resembles in its mode of attack. During daylight it passes the greater part of its time in sleep, and altogether may then be considered an indolent animal; but, when night approaches, and hunger has whetted its appetite, I defy the observer to note a more perfect example of grace, ease, and rapidity of movement. The colours of the fur of the leopard of the plains and woodlands are not so brilliant as those of its *confrères* of the mountains; still, it is very beautiful, and outshines those of all other animals in richness and elegance.

A few years ago I brought home a number of both these animals' skins, which, after being retanned and shaved down on the inner side to the thickness of chamois leather, made the most attractive drawing-

room antimacassars I ever saw ; in fact, they provoked such universal admiration, that I should advise any young brother sportsman, who possesses an ardent attachment for a lady fair, in whose superlative graces he wishes to bask and breathe out existence, not to forget to provide himself with an abundant supply of these lovely skins as gifts for his innamorata, for failure after such a donation must be his fault, and his only.

With the natives, the skin of the leopard makes their most aristocratic kaross ; thus we see the uncivilised and uneducated Bechuanas and Matabeles adopting the favourite mantle of Greece in the olden times ; for Homer, in his “*Iliad*,” speaking of Menelaus, says :

“With a pard’s spotted hide his shoulders broad
He mantled o’er——”

The general mode of attack made by this animal upon such of its prey as are formidable from size, is to dislocate the victim’s neck by means of its powerful teeth and claws simultaneously used. This is done by a sudden wrench, made with such force as to at once break the vertebra of even an ox or horse.

The Boers do not like attacking the leopard unless under favourable circumstances ; all the natives, except the Bushmen, decline the contest altogether ; but although this warning may not prevent my countrymen hunting it, I trust it will have the effect of guarding them from encountering it, otherwise than with the greatest care and circumspection.

At mid-day orders were issued to prepare to march in three hours. This command was received in anything but a friendly spirit, for my attendants had formed many agreeable acquaintances, and did not consider that they had yet used up half the game that was to be found in the locality. Master Cookey, as usual, was the most mutinous, and, although repeatedly cautioned that such conduct would lead him into trouble, warnings were thrown away upon him. While busy making a new *yoke skee*, I heard angry words between him and "Chummy." Now, my friend was about the last person to provoke a discussion, or initiate a dispute, but, if led into either, he had a quiet way of his own of getting out of them, which was thoroughly effective and dignified. So, in no way alarmed as to the result, I thrust my head round the corner of the tilt of the wagon (under

the shadow of which I was working with a draw-knife), and thus had an excellent survey of the whole scene.

My friend had ordered this indolent and bloated disciple of Soyer to expedite the packing of his cooking apparatus, which he refused to do, at the same time expressing disapproval of our general conduct, and more particularly of our departure from this favoured locality. Now Master Cookey's tongue not only wagged freely, but when he was declaiming, his arms were thrown about in a most threatening manner to give emphasis to his elocution. Again I heard him ordered to shut up, but this gentle admonition was not received in the sense it was intended. Quite the reverse, for his tongue became more prolific of abuse and his arms more threatening of action. I was almost commencing to think that "Chummy" was deferring the finale too long, more especially as some of the mutineers who supported the spokesman were already grinning in high delight at one of the Basses being thus publicly defied, when I heard my friend quietly hiss between his teeth, "Take that, then." And he did take it, a good straightforward hit right from the shoulder, which

grounded the foe like a felled bullock. Cookey, although fat, was still not incapable of activity when emergency demanded its employment, so he picked himself up in an instant and, head down, rushed forward, with the intention of grappling with his chastiser. I suppose this disobedient retainer thought that if he could once obtain a hold, it would all be up with the white man. Poor fellow, he was wonderfully deceived, for just as he reached the proper distance, my comrade dexterously raised his right knee and caught the refractory servant in the mouth ; this straightened him up to his full height, which gained, he received a left-hander on his nob, that laid him out as straight as if about to be deposited in his coffin.

The whole affair did not exceed thirty seconds in being enacted, and so perfectly was it performed that roars of laughter greeted the discomfited warrior as he arose, and proceeded without further hesitation to fulfil his allotted task. I do not approve of employing such measures ; but, if discipline has to be maintained, it is sometimes necessary to adopt them.

At the appointed hour the cattle were in their

yokes, and, after much hand-shaking and innumerable good wishes from the residents of the adjoining station, we started. The river-bed, which we had to cross, and the incline up its opposite side, were both stiff pulls; but our beasts were fresh and in good heart, so each was accomplished without a halt, when before us lay stretched a truly charming upland country. In many parts of it, more particularly in the hollows, the timber reached to a goodly size, while its foliage was varied with every tint, from deepest green to dark orange colour, all resting upon a carpeting of scarlet-flowering verbenas. Amongst the woodland, frequently reclined enormous slabs of sandstone rock, some of them of gigantic size, lying one upon the other, as if piled up by some Titanic agency, and now covered with parasitic plants, green as the pine or ivy, giving them a close resemblance to many a mediæval ruin to be seen in our dear old island home.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EXCITING SCENE.

A Noble Quarry—Splendid Hunt—Marvellous Hounds.

IN many parts of the earth there is far grander scenery to be found than in Bechuana Land. For its excellence in this respect I claim nothing; but, for sites for homesteads of pastoral farmers, it would be very difficult indeed to find a more attractive country. It is not all so, I must acknowledge; but then the magnitude of the country ought to be remembered, and, having taken that into account, the attractive portion will be found quite equal in extent to that which does not recommend itself. It is true, I would not care to reside in it when the game is killed off; but the question naturally arises, Where would I prefer a residence that possessed no wild animals? Nowhere; the land that suffers from such a misfortune,

could never be a dwelling-place of mine, although it possessed the wealth of the Indies. For this reason if for no other, I could never make New Zealand my home.

I can see your politician, manufacturer, merchant, and all such selfish wretches smile at the above assertion. They are, of course, at liberty to do so if they choose; but infinitely more dear to me are the pleasures of the chase, the enjoyment of unpolluted nature, and the study of animal life, than the gratifying of selfish ambition, amassing wealth, or glorying in the success you have obtained at the expense or the ruin of others.

About sundown we were trekking along, and, as frequently occurs, a considerable space, say three hundred yards, separated the wagons; a splendid zebra passed between them. A finer specimen of the breed could not have been found, even if sought for. The animal's appearance denoted distress, for its lips were lathered with foam, while many a flake of the same adhered to its chest and flanks; still it was galloping well within itself, and looked capable of doing many another mile. Both "Chummy" and self had a fair chance to shoot it, but desisted, for we

had meat in abundance to satisfy all our wants, and to add to the store would only have had the effect of demoralising our people, and consequently prolonging the journey ; so we let the beautiful specimen of the Almighty's creation go on unharmed.

A few minutes after a sharp yet half-smothered yelp struck upon our ears. The note was new to my companion, not so to the writer, so I told him to retire with me a short distance—for we had not yet crossed the zebra's spoor—and he would see a pack of hounds in full cry that for speed, nose, and endurance would surpass any he had ridden to at home. Fifty paces at the most brought us back to the *voorloper* of the hinder wagon, when we halted, so as not to foul the scent and annoy the pursuers. If a master of foxhounds reads this—one I know of in the Midland counties especially—I can, as I write, hear him say, “Good men, good men,” while possibly an adjective or two are added to his encomiums that he doubtlessly derived from some of his ancestors that served with our troops in the “low countries.” But there is a great deal of excuse for masters of hounds in using strong expletives ; for every one will acknowledge that it is trying,



CAPE HUNTING DOG (*Lycan Pictus*).

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very trying—well, here I was about to let go in the superlative degree—to see a lot of ribbon-vendors and bankers' clerks, with a modicum of juvenile saw-bones, vets and legalised robbers (attorneys), trying their best to ride over the ornaments of the hunt.

But let me cast back. We were not kept long waiting: through the long grass first one head and then another made its appearance, and soon after were not only the leaders in full view, but from twelve to fifteen couple more, closely up to their sterns. It was a grand sight, and right willingly would I have cheered the gallant hounds on, but that I feared such a course would have been injurious to them, until they had passed forward of where we stood. That the scent was hot—burning—there could be no doubt, for the pace was terrific, every head being up and every stern down, while the music was reduced to driblets.

Although the day had so far waned, if we had had horses saddled, "Chummy" and self would have been in the "pig-skin" in a minute, and in spite of ant-hills, porcupine and meer-kat holes, seen the finish; but, alas! our nags were half-a-mile in the rear, and to call them up in time was utterly im-

possible. Man is a queer anomaly, for—can the reader believe it?—we both sympathised with the zebra, yet we both sympathised with the hounds; probably more with the latter. Goody-goody people will say this was wrong, for the weak and the hunted ought to have had our good wishes. I know such was taught me at school, and doubtlessly is inculcated by School Board teachers into the rising generation; but on such an occasion as the above I fear “precept and practice do not dovetail.”

But while moralising on what is wrong and what is right, the gallant pack has passed out of view, so I will try to describe the appearance of its members, instead of their future exploits.

The Cape hunting dog, hyena dog, *wilde honde* (*Lycan pictus*), is, to all intents and purposes, a dog, yet exhibits many points of resemblance to the hyena, more especially in its head and ears, as well as in the droop that takes place from its shoulders to the hind quarters. Its height seldom reaches two feet, twenty-two inches being nearer the average. In extreme length it is usually under four feet and a half. The colour of the body of the Cape hunting dog is very diversified, still very fox-houndish, being

a combination of gray, intermixed with black and brown spots, while the nose, muzzle, and face are black. The tail, which is bushy, but much less so than that of the fox, is divided by a dark ring, the upper part of which is sandy gray and the lower white. Its destructive powers are enormous ; so much so that pastoral farmers, before the introduction of strychnine, were often driven by its ravages from their homesteads.

In character this animal is a strange combination of courage and timidity, for at one time it will treat the presence of human beings with contempt, nay, even attack them, while, on another occasion, it will avoid them by the use of every artifice with which it is cognisant.

Several times I have possessed these animals. To tame them I found impossible on account of their extreme nervousness. One specimen that I possessed for a short time would go into a fit if suddenly alarmed or an attempt made to handle it.

When hunting, the wild hounds always go in packs, the number of members in such an association being sometimes over fifty ; and so perfect are their powers of scent that, when once they

settle down upon the trail of game, its fate is certain, unless it should reach water of sufficient depth to cause the assailants to swim when approaching it.

The larger antelopes, zebras, and quaggas, having gained such a sanctuary, at once come to bay, and with their sharp and powerful hoofs soon beat off their antagonists, but seldom before many of them have been disabled or killed outright.

However, if such an asylum is not within reach, the hunting dogs lie alongside their victims till a chance to lay hold occurs, when, if the prey be a male, they emasculate him; if a female, tear off her udder, or open her intestines by dragging on her flank.

In this respect the African animal exactly resembles its Indian brother, and of it, in the Colony, similar stories are in circulation to those narrated by the natives of Hindostan regarding their indigenous beast, viz., that the former will not hesitate to attack and kill the lion, as the latter is reported frequently so to do to the royal tiger.

CHAPTER XXV.

MIGRATION.

A Free Life—Abdim's Stork—A Yarn.

THAT evening we reached a vley, welcome from the large quantity of pure, clear water it possessed. The reason of this, doubtless, was that it was situated upon a stone bed, with rock surroundings entirely free from sand or alluvial deposit. But for this natural protection, combined with the precipitousness of its banks, it must have been fouled by the numerous wild animals that frequented the locality. If any of the neighbouring *boke* had been induced to risk their safety by descending this steep enclosure, it is more than doubtful whether they would ever have been able to regain the top of the banks, so the reader will perceive that wild animals have often more judgment than is accredited to them. On the other hand, the very fact of the water being so far beneath the level

of the surrounding country, afforded us no end of trouble in obtaining the required amount of this valuable commodity to supply the wants of each bullock. While my attendants were employed in this necessary duty, I wandered a short distance from our camp; the sun was about setting, and the west was one glorious sheet of scarlet, gradually decreasing in the intensity of its colour till it entirely disappeared in the zenith. Not a flaw of wind stirred a leaf or blade of grass, and, but for the voices of my men, or the occasional low of a fatigued ox, one might have imagined that he had been suddenly dropped into an uninhabited world. There is a freedom in this life that makes it truly charming; there is a fascination in it, to drink of which causes one further to crave for its repetition. Your fellow-man you love not the less, but this world you love the more for the relief that is afforded you, by finding it possible to be removed from the bustle and excitement of dense population. If duns are not numerous, or beggars not importunate, at home, there is much pleasure in hearing the postman's knock; but who, in civilisation, I should like to know, does not either dread the first, or fear the latter? But

here you have no postman, no importunate creditor, no cravers for charity, no disgusting specimens of wretched, debased humanity.

During the latter portion of our march I had frequently heard a noise, so subdued by distance that I could scarcely be certain what bird produced it. Now I was about to learn, for loud and clamorous became the formerly doubtful voices. Raising my eyes aloft, against the gradually decreasing opal tints of the western heavens were thousands of birds circling around, one flight apparently being over the other, till the more distant totally disappeared in the altitude that they had obtained. As I supposed these birds not to be nocturnal, I impatiently waited to see them alight; nor was I kept waiting, for as the long, dark shadows of trees and rocks that precede darkness were rapidly elongating themselves across the veldt, and mingling more thoroughly with each other, a few of the nearest birds closed their wings and, with rapid swoop, descended upon the earth. This seemed to be the signal for all to do likewise, for with one accord the most distant and the nearest at hand followed the example set them, until the plain was covered by many thousands.

Not till then did I recognise what these unknowns were. Now I became aware that they were Abdim's storks (*Ciconia Abdimii*), perhaps the handsomest of all the species of this family. The extent of country which they inhabit may well be imagined when I state that I have found them in equal abundance in the *toundras* of Mongolia, the marshes of Southern Siberia, the flats surrounding the Mababé river, or the locality of Lake N'Gami. Like all the storks that I have met with in Southern Africa, they possess that ludicrous habit of dancing and posing themselves in strange attitudes in front of each other. The reason of these movements is, doubtless, to excite the admiration of the opposite sex. It is a strange and quaint way of doing so, we may think; still, it is not half so absurd, I may say senseless, in them, as the sight of human beings dancing some of their most popular sets when deprived of the charitably disposing influences of music.

Abdim's stork appears to be gifted with most extraordinary powers of digestion and a love for a variety of food, for it devours with equal gusto, locusts or beetles, with a wholesome intermixture of frogs, water-rats, snakes, and fish. Nature, in her providence, has

gifted this bird with the most attractive plumage, the chin and the inside of the ears being vermilion red, the front of the head light flesh-colour, and the remainder bluish-purple; the legs are green, changing to vermilion at the joints, with toes dusky on the upper and lower sides. The iris is grayish-brown, with a streak above the eyes extending half-way to the setting on of the bill, a minute spot on the lower eyelid terminating my description.

The whole flock appeared to be exhausted from excessive travel, for, soon after they had reached the ground, each member seemed to court repose. It was a shame to disturb them, nay, almost a crime to do so. Yet when will man deny himself what he longs for, even when it be at the expense of the happiness of others, whether they be equals or inferiors in his arbitrary scale of rank in the animal world; so I fired two shots into the storks, each of which produced a victim, when the remainder sailed off into the gloaming in search of another and more peaceful resting-place.

From Manchuria to the Red Sea, and from the Red Sea to South Africa, probably this flight of birds has travelled, and yet, although they have

encountered Kalmucks, Tartars, Chinese, Persians, Arabs, and numerous black races, it may be safely assumed they had not met such an uncharitable welcome until they encountered a representative of civilised and Christianised humanity. I suppose I am no worse than my neighbours, and that they would have done as I did ; still it is small credit to them as well as to myself.

The following day, as we drew close to our mid-day halt, while marching at the head of our wagons, I was solicited by one of those well-known specimens of African ornithology, the little honey guide (*Indicator minor*) to follow it. Its efforts to attract attention and its boldness in doing so at first strike the inexperienced with surprise, for it not unfrequently flies and hovers so close to the traveller's head as to be almost within grasp of his hand. This bird is a true cuckoo, and lays its eggs indiscriminately in the nests of various species which are not large enough to resent the intrusion. I fear the domestic character of both sexes is really very bad, the ladies light of love, the gentlemen inconstant, or they would not be so destitute of affection as to desert their progeny in this barefaced manner. I have several times made the attempt to keep them in

captivity, but have always failed; the reason, no doubt, being that when immured in a cage they are unable to procure their proper food, viz., insects.

That the little honey guide will lead you to the nests of bees, is beyond dispute, and that it will wait for a portion of the spoil to be given it, is equally true; but the natives assert that it is a mischievous little elf, and that reliance is not always to be placed upon the honesty of its solicitations, for that frequently, out of very devilment, it will take its followers into the jaws of a lion, or possibly into the haunt of some formidable poisonous snake. This I deem an error; at the same time do not doubt that when human beings have been following it to procure the honey it wished to point out to them, they have run in contact with a beast of prey, or nearly stepped upon a venomous serpent.

Our halting-place that day was a beautiful grove. The giant among the trees that composed it was a large banyan, under which we drew up our wagons, alike sheltered from heat and glare. While the cattle and horses are grazing, come, gentle reader, and seat yourself beside me upon the *dissel-boom* of the wagon, for I have to prepare a new *fore-slaght* (lash) for my

driver's whip, and, while I do so, I can converse with you without interruption to my work. Let me say, before proceeding farther, that the *fore-slaght* is a thin slip of brayed leather, about the size of a boot-lace, and between two and three feet long. The skin of the bless-bok is supposed to make the best, and care must be taken in cutting it that it tapers regularly from one end to the other. Moreover, it has to be delicately trimmed down so as to remove the edges, after which preparation it is stiffened by being saturated in water or saliva. It requires a sharp knife to produce a workmanlike one, and to get the necessary keen edge nothing makes a better strop than the side of a *yoke-skey*.

Before I commence to narrate, take a look round and see that the beasts are settled to their pasture. You may well say it is a beautiful scene that surrounds us, and not to be excelled in the eyes of those who love nature, for it is a landscape, unchanged, unaltered, since the Almighty vouchsafed it the finishing touches of His master hand.

I have stated that I sent for Cigar, the Hottentot. Well, you want to know what manner of man he is, and I will now record one of his adventures, as

narrated by him to me when trekking one night between Bamanwato and the Matabele country. But before doing so you must remember that he speaks English as fluently as I can myself.

"You remember, Bass, 'my lord,' so the person was called by all his friends and acquaintances, from the gorgeous apparel he wore and the eccentricity of the mannerism he ever adopted ; but these absurdities covered a brave and kind heart. Well, we were in Mashoona Land together, he having trekked up from Bamanwato to Bulwio, where he joined me; for I was then trading for ivory in the Matabele country. Game had become a little scarce, for much shooting had been done in the neighbourhood; so, as we had a large following of attendants, we were not very particular what fell to our rifles as long as it filled the pot.

"As I had secreted several elephants' tusks in an adjoining sand river, I resolved to take some of my people with me and go and bring them in. When about to start 'my lord' joined me, armed with his Express rifle, with the hope that he might pick up a *bok* by the way. We had about completed our tramp, when we came across an old bull buffalo, whose

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temper we could see was none of the sweetest ; and well it might be so, for his back was badly clawed by lions. Of course the old bull had beaten his enemies off, or he would not have been where he was, and but little the worse for the encounter, or he would not have given us the trouble he did. The aged warrior would not get out of our way, on the other hand, showed a strong disposition to attack us ; so, as the old fool was scarcely worth a charge of powder and lead, we made a bend in our course to avoid him. Another reason, possibly, for adopting this plan was that none of us were armed, except with *assegaïs*, if 'my lord' be left out, and his small-bore was scarcely the thing for killing such heavy game ; well, when I say killing, I may be wrong in that, but it would not drop it where it stood. It was a long time before I could get this white man to give up the idea of making the attempt to shoot the beast ; but at length he consented to do so, after a great waste of time and words, for he was as obstinate as he was plucky. Even then I should not have gained my point if I had not told him that, if he did so, he must move his camp from mine, for, as long as he was with me, I felt responsible

for his safety; in fact, the Matabele king had told me as much before I left his *kraal*.

"While we were hunting up the ivory, 'my lord' strolled off to look for game; but, as he did not come back when we were ready to return, I took a couple of my people, and went in search of him. His spoor led us from one *copje* to another, and, as we thought it was probable he had returned to our starting-place without us, we were about to give up the search, when one of my men pointed out the white man in a hollow scarcely three hundred yards off, and at the moment in the attitude of firing. At what? Well, the same confounded old bull we had seen earlier in the day.

"The buffalo was not fifty yards from him, and its manner showed that it meant mischief, for it was tossing its head about and beating its flanks with its tail. This was bad enough; but, worse still, there was not a tree or bush in any direction within two or three minutes' run, that would afford shelter, if our friend had to take to his legs; and this description of game can go almost as fast as a horse for the first three or four hundred yards. I would have raised my voice to shout to him to hold

his fire, but what good would that do? The mischief was done already, for, fire or not, he could not now avoid the contest. But puff went the rifle. The bullet hit, I thought, in the head, for the brute shook it violently about for some seconds, and then came on with a rush. Your countryman stood his ground well, and gave the mad beast another shot. This took effect for a moment, for it caused the bull to stumble for a stride or two; but nothing more. To shove cartridges into the breeches of his rifle there was not time, so 'my lord' adopted the last chance he had of escape, and, under the circumstances, it was a poor one—poor as could be—made a run for it.

"While this was taking place I and my people were doing our best to render our friend what help we could, but without fire-arms it was little enough indeed, excepting that it was just possible that we could draw off the beast's attention from him. However, that chance seemed to be denied us, for, before we were a hundred yards from the scene, the buffalo caught its enemy in the back and sent him spinning head over heels for many a yard in its rear. Fortunately the grass was rather long where he fell, and he had the sense to lie still, so the bull lost sight of him.

But this delay could not last long, for the now infuriated animal would be sure to ultimately wind its prey and trample out of him what little of life remained. Who could stand by and see this game played and not interfere? Well, I could not, so I seized two *assegaïs* from one of my people and rushed at the bull; nor was I an instant too soon, for at that moment it had discovered its victim.

“Possibly this was the reason that the buffalo did not see me, it being intent on completing the work it had commenced; for, before the beast could lower its head to pick up its victim when it charged, I had passed one *assegai* into its shoulder, following it up with the second through the neck as the brute turned round to charge me. It was the last thrust that did the work, for as soon as it was delivered blood spouted for yards from the bull’s nostrils. He made several efforts to charge, but could not, so my people soon put him beyond doing further mischief.

“This did not save the life of ‘my lord;’ he died next day from his injuries, and is buried at the root of the *murruli* tree where his wagon was *outspanned*.”

Comment on Cigar’s, the Hottentot’s conduct, in this affair, I will not make; I leave that for the reader to do.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SCRIPTURAL CONEY.

The Hyrax—An Interesting Family—Birds of Prey.

By the time my *fore-slaght* was finished, "Chummy" brought his folding-chair and took a seat beside me. My friend had a most reassuring countenance, and the manner in which he enjoyed his *otium cum dignitate* was really comforting. His consumption of cigarettes was enormous—in fact, the quantity of these romance-constructing trifles (for do they not whisper memories of the languishing eyes and graceful walk of *signoritas mui bonita*?) that he condemned daily to suffer from his inordinate love of the weed, must have been a small fortune to dealers in soothing, good-fellowship-promoting tobacco. How daintily many a fair equestrian handles her switch, how bewitchingly many a daughter of Eve uses her fan; but "Chummy" could almost rival both these

in the delicate, half-supercilious way in which he retained between his lips the most trifling hold of his cigarette.

— His talking proclivities were not great, but when the sound of the crack of a distant whip struck upon both our ears he ejaculated: "One would almost have supposed us far enough from civilisation not to have our ears defiled by such a mark of it," and so agreed I.

On looking round, two wagons were observed in sight, heavy-loaded, travel-stained, and much the worse for wear and tear. Soon they drew up alongside of ours, and a stalwart Boer descended from the forechest of one to make our acquaintance. He was not clean to look at, and he smelt offensively—neither objectionable state being uncommon among this erratic race. But this was scarcely to be wondered at in this instance, for his conveyances were loaded with green hides—skins of every kind of game known in the neighbourhood. When will this wholesale slaughter of the ornaments of creation terminate? Never, till grasping, covetous man has destroyed all, for the sake of the filthy lucre they get in return for their skins. If the receiver of stolen property is as bad

as the thief, the smug-faced, well-to-do colonial store-keeper's conduct in purchasing such wares is more reprehensible than the slaughterer's is, for the first is educated, the last the personification of ignorance and brutality.

From this descendant of Holland, the new arrival, I bought two excellent Bassuto ponies and the skins of some rock rabbits, the *klip das* of the Dutch, the *Hyrax capensis* of the naturalist, the hides of which can be converted into innumerable useful purposes.

After informing our new acquaintance, on which subject he seemed to be extremely solicitous, our names, whether married or not, and the number of *kinders* each possessed, "Chummy" thought his turn had come to be questioner, so asked the Boer his name.

"Grobler," was the answer

"Grobler!" in surprise murmured "Chummy."

"Ya! Grobler," said the Dutchman, with emphasis.

"Yes; I understand, Grobler," said my pal, measuredly but emphatically; "but my friend, will you inform me where do you expect to go to when you die with such a name?"

"With such a name! Grobler good name. When I die I go where no *dom Inglander* gets in."

And with wrath he was about to depart, when "Chummy" added:

"I trust not, for the society would not be pleasant for my countryman."

In writing a description of such a scene, justice cannot be done to it, for it was the manner of both, and their antithesis to each other in bearing, that made it irresistibly ludicrous. From the ludicrous to the serious is conceded to be only a step, and such brutes as these were the slaughterers of the youth and flower of our troops during the late Transvaal war, and with whom was made a dishonourable peace.

Of the rock rabbit I should say a few words. It is supposed to be the coney of the Scriptures, and certainly it does take up its residence in the stoniest of stony places; but, for all this, naturalists make it the transition from the rhinoceros to the hippopotamus; this classification doubtlessly arising from its dental formation; more extraordinary still, to the uninitiated, is its being placed among the *Pachydermata*.

Unquestionably scientists are correct in their classification. Still, the ordinary observer would scarcely hesitate at first sight to believe this strange, wary, timid little beast to be a rodent.

Learning from several of my visitors that rock rabbits abounded on some neighbouring *copjes* a short distance to the westward, I resolved to spend an afternoon shooting them. These animals are so exceedingly wary that without a knowledge of their habits, and taking advantage of a weakness (curiosity) in their characters, the sportsman might almost interminably go without the reward of even a sight of them. To be brief, then, like nearly all mountain residents, the klip-das only appear to apprehend danger from beneath, therefore they must be approached from above. Moreover, they are gifted with such curiosity and a love of strange musical sounds, that they will remain for almost any length of time staring and listening when their attention is so attracted, provided always that no attempt is made to become on too familiar terms with them. Thus I resolved on the following programme: After proceeding to such a position as would make the almost exhausted wind of the afternoon favourable, a native was to enter



ROCK RABBIT, OR KLIP DAS (*Hyrax capensis*).

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a *kloof* between two of the *copjes*, robed in a scarlet blanket, and provided with one of his people's primitive Jew's-harps, there to contort himself in such a manner as would be certain to attract the attention of the beasts sought after, while I, by making a detour, came up the back of one of these hillocks, that overlooked the conies' retreats.

The part of the programme I had undertaken was very fatiguing, from the rough and irregular nature of the ground, while the heat was as intense as the interior of an oven, on account of the reflected rays of the sun. But the *copje* was not very high, so that my perseverance was rewarded ere it became exhausted, and I found myself on the summit before I expected.

From my position, several hundred feet above the plain, I had a grand view over a country quite different from that we had lately travelled ; for instead of undulating grass lands, miles and miles of rough and broken ground extended north and westward, making exactly such haunts as are invariably chosen by the rock-loving koodoo and klip-springer.

Having noted these circumstances, I raised my head gently over the margin of the brow to see if my attendant was visible—yes, there he was, just as hoped for. For once a native had obeyed his instructions to the letter; so, what between his punctuality and the startlingly brilliant scarlet blanket encircling his shoulders, I anticipated having a regular red-letter day to add to my calendar of pleasant reminiscences.

Elevating the muzzle of my rifle, to which was bound my pocket-handkerchief, as a signal to let the Bechuana know that I had reached my perch, at once the fellow commenced to dance and play with the ardour of Terpsichore and the enthusiasm, if not the skill, of Orpheus.

Whatever the rock rabbits thought of the *divertissement* I know not, but to me it was irresistibly funny. I once heard some negro minstrels in one of the Southern States sing that highly edifying and thoroughly instructive melody, "Sally come up, Sally come down, Sally come twist your heel around," and interlard each verse with the most comical, dexterous, and violent breakdown. I considered that performance fine—very fine, but my darkie down below was in

no way inferior to the burnt cork gentlemen across the Atlantic, but rather topped them, by adding occasional variations of the ever graceful can-can step, which step, by-the-bye, Paris doubtlessly imported from Bechuana Land, as she has done numerous other useful and ornamental things from foreign climes.

The scarlet blanket, fastened gracefully around the man's chest, with a couple of feet of it at the least trailing behind, was a great improvement on the accepted negro costume of a very long swallow-tailed coat and striped, close-fitting pants, for the reason that such a toga was such as might be expected upon a Booth or Forrest, instead of hanging from the shoulders of a real, veritable, uncivilised representative of the human family. There was one drawback, alas! to my amusement; it was a selfish one, doubtless, still it did exist, viz., that the *pas de seul* I was watching was "rather rough" on my blanket.

If I was entertained, there were others also who were equally amused. These were a family party of little gray monkeys on a heap of boulders to my left, and several rock rabbits on the edge of a cliff directly beneath my position. My presence in my sanctuary was quite unknown to both, so I had a

grand opportunity of learning some of the characteristics of each race.

Both species were an excellent audience, but they conducted themselves differently; for the first-mentioned stared, blinked their eyes, made faces, relieving the monotony of this programme by an occasional hurried scratch of their flanks or underneath their arm-pits, the more juvenile ones not unfrequently without ceremony (for this race does not seem to be respecters of age) crowding their elders to one side to make room for themselves; or, when this effort was ineffective, pulling a senior's tail with sufficient force to show that they had not much veneration for that graceful appendage.

The rock rabbits, on the other hand, were more phlegmatic spectators, only occasionally expressing approbation by the utterance of a gentle note, not unlike that of a pleased guinea-pig, or turning solemnly to their next neighbour with an inquiring expression depicted in their eyes, as much as to say, "What do you think of that, now?" The klip-das is unquestionably the Dutch burgomaster of the quadruped creation, being undemonstrative, rotund, indisposed to exertion, with a certain formality

about its waddling movements that speaks as plainly as words can say, "Any undue hurrying of my locomotion, any forced precipitancy in my movements will be rewarded with my severest displeasure."

While making these comments on the characters of both the animals under observation, the violence of the exercise which my follower was undergoing commenced to tell upon his powers of endurance, or the delay he was submitted to lessened his zeal, so I deemed it better to select my victims and fire. The right barrel did its work clean, the left was not so effective, yet it tumbled the object aimed at into a crevice beneath, where it fell upon its back, and from which position it was unable to extricate itself, either from its rotundity of person or the severity of its wound. But pause, reader, before I pick the game up, and observe the effects of the sound of my rifle's reports upon the animal life that was so lately in view. To the left the monkeys will be perceived going as if "the old scratch" himself was after them, hopping and bounding with tails in the air, and evidently only intent on their individual safety; selfish—the quintessence of selfishness—they undoubtedly are, giving them an additional

claim to be placed by naturalists in the rotation in which the order *Mammalia* is classified, close in proximity to man. The rock rabbits, too, have disappeared, but their retreat has not been disgraced by such precipitancy or apparent disregard for the safety of their comrades. Previously not a bird had been in sight; now numerous hawks and carrion feeders are sailing aloft on broad, expanded pinions, inspecting with inquisitive eye the intruder into the privacy of their domain, while lower down, and closer to earth's surface, numerous black and white ravens, very clerical in appearance and very fond of meddling in affairs that don't concern them, hurry out of range, cawing incessantly a warning to the inferior animal creation that they had better be on the look-out, as the most dreaded and most destructive of all animals—man—is in their vicinity. I could forgive these ravens, for their intentions doubtless are good, still would prefer that they took some other means of showing them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOUTH AFRICAN FLORA.

A Young Botanist—Bad Shooting—Kindness to Children.

By this time my “boy” has joined me with the game, and two fine plump fellows they are, over whom my follower fairly gloated in anticipation of at no distant date enjoying a feed upon their carcasses.

Following round the face of the rocks nothing worth shooting presents itself; still, to the observant eye, indications are to be detected that tell that the locality was not always so deserted.

The variety of heaths to be found in these highlands are as numerous as they are beautiful, and present a field of research for the botanist that has been but little intruded upon. When I travelled in Japan, about twenty-five years ago, I was for a lengthened period in constant companionship with Mr. John Veitch, alas! now dead. He was a most

skilful and enthusiastic botanist, and well can I remember the ecstasy he would go into over the flora found upon the hillsides and in the valleys that surrounded land-locked bays, which our ship, now and then, was forced to take shelter in from the dreaded typhoon raging without on open ocean. In those days no European foot had ever traversed these far distant braes, much less a lover of the vegetable kingdom seeking for new species upon their slopes; thus this search had an additional, I may say exceptional, attraction for him, and perseveringly and zealously did he take advantage of it; in proof of which the observer had but to note the loads of cuttings, leaves, roots, and flowers with which he would return to the ship at sundown. Mr. Veitch was far from loquacious, but to hear him speak of the treasures he had obtained was almost sufficient to make the listener as enthusiastic in his noble science as himself.

Now here, in the country I am now describing, is a field almost as attractive for the botanist as was distant Japan. I admire, yes, I idolise flowers, and the man who does not do so is, I believe, without a belief in a future state. On the

other hand, the person who is an enthusiast in his admiration of these gems of creation, lives in the knowledge of the existence of a Creator, who originates all things, controls all things. Admire man's handiwork as you will, his knowledge of the harmony of colour, his capacity of construction; with all his ingenuity he can never in any respect approach in rivalry the most unobtrusive flower or the glorious blossoms that rejoice in the presence of a tropical sun. Perhaps they are given to remind us of the future state in store for those that love Him.

But, while thinking with regret how ignorant I am upon subjects touching upon botany, a clatter of stones is heard above me, my attendant as rapidly as possible halting in his advance to point to what caused the noise, and in silent pantomime asking me to shoot. The alarm is caused by two koodoo bulls rapidly passing out of sight. Still, I have time to fire at the last one, but I have to be quick, so after all it is but a snap-shot, and I miss, just as a good many men have done before me; but I do not get into a rage, swing my rifle about my head and abuse it as the cause of my want of skill, as I know some who invariably do on such occasions. No, I simply

hope for better luck next time and many more chances of performing equally unskilfully.

Having reloaded, my companion hurries me alongside of the brow of the ravine for several hundred yards, then over a dip in the ridge for about the same distance, both being performed at such a killing pace as to be alike uncondusive to comfort of body and grace of movement. I never was much account at such spurts, and I did not acquit myself better on this occasion than I usually do, so that when I got well over the ridge it was a case of bellows to mend, and a very bad pair of bellows, too. Oh! that cruel, inconsiderate son of a heathen parent—beseechingly first, imperatively afterwards, he insisted upon my making another effort to reach the shelter of a boulder nearly a hundred yards distant, the intermediate space being covered with rocks and stones varying in size from the dimensions of a pianoforte to that of a cocoa-nut. Fool that I was not to resist the mandate, for in my effort I nearly came a cropper, which, if it had taken place, must either have smashed some important part of my construction or that of my rifle's. However, I have reason to thank that Providence that looks after

poor Jack, for I reached the stone without mishap ; but, oh ! what a state I was in. I once heard a song, when in the land of “the stars and stripes,” which commenced somewhat after this fashion—

Oh ! my heart was made to flutter,
As I stepped across the gutter,
By the pretty girl that winked at me.

Now, that young man’s case was nothing to mine ; for, instead of my heart fluttering, it was hammering, thump, thump, against my ribs, as if it desired to escape from the control of a person who treated it “badly.”

I have no delicacy in confessing that I leaned against that rock. More, I may as well acknowledge, while in a truthful frame of mind, if that rock had not been there, I should have laid down, so was commencing to feel grateful for its support, when the villainous black fellow seized me and tried to draw me from my resting-place. It was not in my power to resist, so I made a virtue of necessity, and came forth, when, straight in front of me, not thirty yards off, were the two bull koodoos passing, their pace being about as rapid as might be expected

in animals that, as a rule, took this world easily, and had become fat through always looking at the bright side of life.

"Fire, did you?" I can hear the reader ask. Yes, I did fire, and both barrels, too. The bullet of the first went into space, for it left no indication of its lodging-place. That out of the second hit the ground about ten yards in front of me, my judgment in elevation being evidently very, very faulty.

Such want of success was trying, no one will doubt. However, I was prepared to put up with it; but when the Bechuana commenced to reproach me in the choicest epithets of that most melodious language, I felt "mean," deuced mean, which is always a bad state for a Christian to be in, particularly an educated one, for when a man fails to respect himself he is in a truly deplorable condition.

Our journey home did not take long, for it was not interrupted by a flow of conversation or a feast of good fellowship; in fact, I don't think either of us cared much how soon we parted company. For my part, I rather think I should have preferred the parting, for then I should not have to listen to



KOODOO (*Strepsiceros koodoo*).

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the sooty pagan narrating over the camp fire, to his grinning associates, how the bass, with both barrels, missed a pair of koodoo bulls (beasts as big as a three-year-old steer) at about thirty paces.

I was not far enough gone in the late misadventure not to recognise that they were bulls I had failed to shoot, for the simple reason that the cows do not carry horns, and such horns as these had—I think I never previously saw finer; and, in my opinion, of all the trophies that come from South Africa they are the most to be coveted. As I have shot numbers of these animals previously in this sportsman's paradise, I will here do my best to describe their beauties. At the shoulder it stands not unfrequently over fourteen and a half hands in height. The body is a dark slate colour, marked by regular transverse bars of white, as if at one time or other it had been galled by a very complicated set of harness. Its eyes are particularly noticeable from their fulness and soft liquid expression, while the ears, which are very much developed, are almost unceasingly in motion, a certain indication of the animal's incessant watchfulness. From its chin, down the throat extends a mane, which also is to

be found upon the back, from the horns along the neck to some distance beyond the withers, while its tail, which is of moderate length, is covered with rough and wavy hair. The horns, however, are its chief characteristic feature, and never to be confused with those of other antelopes when once seen. In length they sometimes exceed four feet, and are possessed of the most regular, graceful, spiral twist from the base almost to the points, along the whole length of which runs a well-developed ridge. Its hoofs, which are very deeply indented and very sharp at the edge, are almost as hard as flint, and thus enable it with impunity to gallop over the roughest and most breakneck-looking country.

After a good night's rest I awoke in the morning in a happier frame of mind than I had retired with; so, having swallowed a strong cup of coffee, I superintended the bullocks being put in the yoke, and the start being made. The country through which we passed was bright and undulating, covered in many places with good wholesome grass, with numerous attractive flowers interspersed through it. The well-known *kamil dorn*, the *mohaalaa* of the natives, and *Acacia giraffæ* of science, is to be found abundantly

scattered over the country, the leaves of its umbrella-shaped top being the favourite food of the animal from which it takes its name. At the season of the year in which this tree is in blossom, the whole air is impregnated with the aromatic perfume produced by its yellow flowers. Not many years ago all this country swarmed with the larger species of antelopes, as well as quagga and ostriches; but skin-hunters, and other abominations of civilisation, have either exterminated the beauties or driven them into distant regions. Springbok and lesser game are still to be found here in considerable quantities; in fact, they are in sufficient numbers to satisfy all such persons as shoot alone for sport. In the afternoon our course was directed more to the eastward, and about the time the sun dipped the western horizon, we reached a most picturesquely-situated kraal, with many trees growing within the enclosure of its fence, and a goodly grove around it. The men were temporarily absent; but this did not prevent the women and children visiting us, the former supplying the camp with an abundance of milk, the latter, quite regardless of age and size, mixing freely among my people. One very good trait all these coloured races possess, that

is, kindness to children, and which is specially observable at the time meals are being taken. If a "tiny mite" approaches on such occasions, and asks for a morsel, it is certain to receive it; even Cookey himself, whom I believe to be the greediest specimen of humanity I ever came across, would not hesitate for a moment, on such a demand being made, to part with a portion of his food. Before dark the males of the population returned. They were a well-grown, healthy lot of men as could be desired—a good proof that they possessed plenty of food; but this necessary of life must have been animal, for they refused to sell us any mealies (Indian corn), of which we commenced to run short, as our horses consumed about three buckets daily. At first I imagined that the natives were deceiving me, but after a time I was satisfied that they told the truth, for the captain, *id est*, head man, without pressing, stated that they expected some bullock loads of grain to arrive shortly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NATIVE COIFFURE.

Jumping Hares—A Cheerful Countenance—Ladies' Toilette.

ADJOINING my new camp were several fields that had all the appearance of being lately cultivated. I inquired of those Bechuanas that visited me why they did not grow a sufficiency for their wants. So they had tried to do, was the answer, but the jumping hares (*Pedetes caffer*) destroyed it before it had time to mature.

Now, as the jumping hare is very succulent food, affords sport, and moreover is a very destructive animal to the agriculturist's crops, a battue was resolved against them; and as there is no time like the present, it was determined that it should take place that night, for it is only after dark that success against these gentry can be hoped for, they being quite nocturnal in their habits, passing the entire day in sleep within the limits of their extensive and often

very deep burrows, the ramifications of which are most intricate.

Our intention was most popular among the villagers; so, when the appointed hour arrived, there were at least a couple of dozen native volunteers assembled to assist in the extermination of their enemies. The arms of all were the favoured knob-kerry, of which I have formerly spoken, as well as narrated with what skill the Bechuanas use this primitive weapon.

We were fortunate in our choice of weather, for the night was both dark and still—great considerations, for this hunt is conducted by fire-light. To many this will appear impossible. No such thing; not a bit more so than it is to shoot a deer by the light of a torch, a performance which is accomplished too frequently, I fear, for those beautiful animals long to remain in abundance in the settled parts of North America.

As we are proceeding to the place where we expect to find the game, I will give the reader a description of it; for, without a knowledge of what the animal's appearance is, the incidents that occurred on the evening in question would lose much of their

interest. The Cape jumping hare, "spring-haas" of the Boers (*Pedetes caffer*), is a little larger than our home-bred animal, which it resembles in colour; but, instead of a scut, the African beast has a long, bushy tail, which forms a very important part in its configuration. The claws on the four toes with which its hind feet are furnished, from their great size, might almost be taken for hoofs of some of the smaller antelopes. This creature is found pretty evenly distributed all over the colony, and in parts of Bechuana Land they abound. When slowly moving about they go on all-fours, but when alarmed, they adopt the kangaroo's method of progression, making springs frequently of thirty feet.

This hare is very timid, and this failing not unfrequently causes it to run into the very danger it seeks to avoid. Its time is spent between sleeping and eating—rumour saying that its appetite is insatiable. Hence the destruction may well be imagined that a score or more of these large beasts can commit in a mealie garden of three or four acres. Their flesh is excellent food, the result of their being entirely vegetable feeders. The females produce three or four young each season, and although externally so much.

resembling many of the Australian animals, the subject of my remarks is not a marsupial.

If some of our aristocratic home-bred sportsmen had seen my party as they started that evening for the scene of our work, they would have pronounced them a motley group, and well might they have done so, for there was not among the lot as much clothing as would have made an ordinary-sized table napkin, while their hides shone resplendent with health and frequent lubrications of rancid butter. This skin dressing does not tend to the sweetness of their scent upon the olfactory nerves of a European, but this is the sole disagreeable that it possesses, while it unquestionably results in producing great comfort to the adopters of the system. In the Bible we learn that oil gave cheerful countenances to the ancients therein spoken of. Here, in our modern times, among a primitive people, uncontaminated by the vices of civilisation, the same result is obtained through the medium of butter. It might be interesting to my readers, especially if I should chance to be honoured by any of the fair sex, to inform them how a Bechuana belle performs her toilet. Her hair, of which she is very proud,

and of which she takes no small amount of care, is dressed in various fashions, fashion being as much a controller of custom there as at home. When first I visited Bechuana Land, all the ladies wore their locks plaited into innumerable small plaits, which hung down like a fringe around the head, under which the ears were perfectly hidden. Each of these plaits after being made was then abundantly lubricated—so abundantly, in fact, that from the end of all was frequently suspended a drop of grease, which with heat and exertion kept drip, drip, dripping upon the shoulders, ultimately running in little channels down to the waist. Now, however, the *coiffure* is of a different fashion, the hair being teased out fibre by fibre, with a porcupine's quill, till their heads look as if a gigantic mop had been placed upon them. On the top, and in the centre of this redundant wig, a pound or even more of animal grease is placed, which has first been well kneaded with a metallic substance extracted from the earth, and which resembles small flakes of mica (*sibilo*) in brilliancy and composition. A lounge in the sun for half-an-hour causes this composition to dissolve, when the grease finds its way over the body and leaves this greatest

adornment of the sex glittering as if sprinkled with diamond dust. Around the ladies' necks are placed several rows of beads, and suspended over their busts innumerable tiers of the same adornments. These are of endless colours, according to the freak and fancy of the wearer, blue and pink being the favourites. The wrists and ankles are decorated in the same way, occasionally relieved by bangles of brass or copper wire. Their earrings, the production of some Birmingham manufactory, are large and showy, while over all is worn a kaross, made generally from the hide of the springbok, or, among the aristocracy, from the pelt of the caraçal or common jackal. It is not an ungraceful method of decorating the body, when one gets accustomed to it, but I must acknowledge that it takes some time to do so.

But, leaving the ladies for the present, as we have reached the scene of our *battue*, our plan of attack was immediately decided upon, viz., to drive in line up wind, with a large lantern on each flank.

The game was exceedingly plentiful, but wilder than anticipated, so the knobkerries did not perform



THE CAPE JUMPING HARE (*Pedetes capensis*).

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so satisfactorily as they usually do. However, I got a couple of shots at twenty yards, or less, both of which proved effective. It could scarcely have been otherwise, when I state that the poor beasts were sitting up like pigmy human beings, with their entire figures clearly defined, gazing with large, lustrous eyes in amazement at the sanctity of their domain being invaded by such a brilliant and unknown display.

In this enclosure there must have been upwards of thirty or forty of these animals, for the rush they made on passing round my flank resembled the tread of a small drove of sheep. I might have fired into the "brown" of them, it is true, and been successful in adding further to my bag, but I hesitated from doing so, in the belief that many more would have gone away wounded than would have been secured. I don't know why, but it has always appeared to me a fearful thing for a wounded animal to die shut up in the cold, damp interior of the earth. There may be some mawkishness in this, for the burrow of a rabbit or a jumping hare may present all the attractiveness to these animals that a well-furnished bedroom does to man, and the majority of the

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human family prefer to resign life in such a place. For my part it is not so; when the final summons comes for me to attend my last parade, I should select to obey it in harness and actively employed.

Our want of success in our first essay against the *spring-haas* induced us to change our plan of campaign at the next mealie garden we visited. This was to surround it and enter it simultaneously from all sides, thus driving the occupants into the centre, when we hoped to be able to account for them more satisfactorily than we had done. A few whistles announced that all was in readiness, so we entered, I having my Zulu henchman in close attendance, with a lantern suspended a little behind me and over my head. Soon I got several shots, but equally rapidly I recognised that firing with a shot-gun under such circumstances was about as dangerous to the beaters as it was to the game, so, from necessity, I was compelled to desist. Not so with my black friends; little cared they where their knobkerries went and what damage they did, and so reckless and fast was their discharge that I found myself in as hot a corner as ever I desire to be. In dodging

one kerrie I upset my black attendant, and in his fall the lantern was nearly extinguished; but he rapidly regained his legs, in no way disconcerted at the catastrophe, or at the prospect of becoming the target of one of these dangerous missiles. Quite the reverse; he appeared to enjoy the danger and excitement of the *mise-en-scène*, if a conclusion might be formed from the display he made of his pearly white teeth, which apparently formed a connecting link from the lobe of his right to that of his left ear.

A wise man would at this moment have lain down, and I confess that for a moment I had my doubts whether or not I should do so, but as rapidly I dismissed the idea, from a knowledge that it would place my prowess in a very doubtful position in the eyes of the Bechuanas surrounding me. The ring which had been formed around the hares could now have scarcely exceeded twenty yards in diameter, and about fifteen or twenty of the game were in the enclosure, seeking an outlet; round and round, grouped together in a pack, they coursed, every moment their numbers becoming diminished. At length a resolution seemed to be

come to by the leaders of this persecuted crowd, for with a rush, all at the same time dashed forward at what they doubtless supposed the weakest portion of the enclosure, fear appearing to give them additional power of flight, and in a moment after the prey was through our *cordon* with a bound. The assailants did not escape this concerted attack scatheless, for two of the most active of the hunters on my left were knocked head over heels, and no wonder can such result have been, when the size of the animals, the velocity, and length of their leaps are remembered; in fact, the concussion that the unfortunates experienced could not have been much unlike one of our home-bred hares being fired at a beater's head out of a catapult. But the hares were gone, and with their departure came a flight of knobkerries past my cranium, which were hurled in pursuit of the escaping animals, that far outdid in danger to human life or limb any of the previous portion of the fray. Fortunately I escaped, but that I solely owed to luck, for a knobkerrie that missed my head wounded my Zulu and smashed my lantern into atoms.

The slaughter of the innocents had been great,

for seventeen dead and dying were gathered together, by far the greater part of which had been killed by my allies. The two men who were knocked down, it is satisfactory to know, suffered only a little blood-letting, the first having received a severe scratch on his forearm from one of the beasts' claws, while the other had a usually very flat nose still more pancaked, and from which poured a tolerably abundant stream of not blue, but very black blood. *Spring-haas* shooting, when followed in the manner I have just described, is unquestionably very exciting, and productive of a heavy bag, still I do not think that I care specially for the amusement; in fact, I may add that I have not practised it since, and do not intend to do so again. When I want a jumping hare as an addition to my larder, I much prefer the simple though less successful plan of going in pursuit of the game, viz., with a single attendant to carry my lantern, and I alone the weapon of destruction.

At daylight next morning we were up and doing; I superintended, as usual, the yoking of the cattle, and when that was accomplished, I took the mare and stole off to the westward, in the hope of coming across the brace of koodoo bulls that had so

thoroughly beaten me on the preceding afternoon. I communicated my intentions to no one, as I did not desire to have any witnesses of a failure. Lately the horses had had little work, and the mare I now bestrode less than any of the others, as she, being still only partly broken, was therefore reserved for my special use. The air was cool and balmy, such an exhilarating atmosphere as I believe is only to be enjoyed on this plateau; its influence had its effect upon my quadruped as well as upon myself, for, after we were out of sight of the teams, I gave her her head, which she had long been struggling to get, and allowed her to select the pace, which for a mile or more was about as fast as she could go.

I am not young now, and it requires more than an ordinary pleasure to bring to me the sensations of delight which I once knew, but nothing seems to do it so thoroughly as a gallop upon a willing, fresh horse over an open country, where the footing is good, and rocks and stones do not crop out to cause you to tighten rein or alter your course. This little mare was a most promising pupil, strength, substance, and symmetry all being combined in her, while her spirit and energy never appeared to permit

her powers to feel overtaxed. The earliness of the hour still allowed several of the nocturnal prowlers to be out of their dens, for I came across a brace of jackals, who, after giving me an impudent stare, as if inquiring what the mischief I was about at such an unseemly time, whisked their voluminous brushes in my face and at once sought shelter in the nearest cover they could find. At that moment I devoutly wished that I had with me some of my greyhounds, the country being open and admirably suited for a course; and jackals are, to my thinking, a much more worthy prey for well-bred dogs to show their merits upon than poor, timid, long-eared puss. While regretting my inability to witness the performance of my greyhounds, I almost galloped upon a pair of hyenas, whose dislike at my intrusion was exhibited by the ugly manner in which they curled their upper lips and exhibited their formidable ivories. But the skulking scoundrels had no idea of waiting for closer intimacy, and at once started, at their long lope, for the rocky country which was now close before me. Before they gained it there was a good three-quarters of a mile (of what looked fair travelling for the little roan) to be traversed by

them, so I determined to try her against the speed of this well-known fast animal. At first the mare did not appear to like her work, the smell that the carrion feeders exuded no doubt being the reason; but when she felt a gentle reminder from my spurs that I was master and determined that she should do my bidding and her utmost, she settled down to the work demanded without further remonstrance than two or three angry shakes of the head. For the first three or four hundred yards it seemed to me to be even betting as to who had the best of the race; but when I gathered my mount together, leaned over her withers and gave a war-whoop of encouragement to her, and of intimidation to the enemy, the willing little beauty appeared to imbibe a fresh addition of speed and fairly to fly with me.

There was no mistake now who had the best of the pace, and evidently the hyenas were aware of it, for they at once separated, the larger going to the right and the lesser to the left. To the first I devoted my attention, and, after a good quarter of a mile, was within twenty yards of his tail, and I felt convinced, from his wobbling gait, that he was sadly blown, the rotundity of his stomach evincing

that he had partaken of an unlimited meal the preceding night. Thus I estimated that two hundred yards would bring me alongside of the pursued, and had almost decided upon the effort, when my little roan began to indicate that she, too, had had enough; so, as there was nothing to be gained by killing the skulker, I took a strong hold of her mouth and gradually pulled up. I was glad to find, on examination, that she was not much distressed, for, after relieving her of the saddle, permitting her to roll in the sand, and causing her to stand with her head to the breeze for a few minutes, except for the sweat soils upon her flanks, a stranger would scarcely have been aware that she had lately gone through such a severe spin.*

A quarter of an hour after I had saddled up, I found the place where I had seen the koodoos the previous day. Here I knee-haltered my nag, and left her to graze until my return. After a walk of several hundred yards, I took a close observation of my surroundings with my Dollond—a binocular, let me say here, never surpassed by any field-glass I

* My saddles were made by Mr. Smith, Strand, next door to Somerset House; they are a new pattern of his invention, and are simply perfect in ventilation and in comfort to man and beast.

have possessed or have seen. I purchased it of the makers the day before sailing, grumbled much at the price, and found out afterwards that I had not been overcharged for it; I wish I could say the same of another part of my outfit; but, to my cost, and I may say sorrow, I cannot.

From behind a screen of rocks I had a long, searching gaze up to windward; nothing animated rewarded my effort, should I except a few baboons, who seemed, thus early in the day, not yet to have recovered from the chilliness of the previous night. They were a long way off, so had not discovered me. Poor beasts! Perhaps they supposed that they were free from danger, as the sun had risen, and their greatest foes of all—the leopards—had by this hour returned to their cavernous homes in the adjoining *krantzes* and caves.

Stealing away quietly—in fact, making my exit from my lurking-place as silently and as invisibly as I possibly could, for a sportsman should ever be a gentleman, and to awaken, frighten, and, perhaps, terrify baboons is no more a gentlemanly performance than to scare old women, for there are invariably ladies and kinders in their assemblies



CHACMA BABOON (*Cynocephalus varius*).

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—I stole to the edge of an adjoining *kloof*, passed down its near side, and ascended the opposite. Long I lay and scanned the russet-brown, igneous-looking stones, but not a sign of the animals I sought for, could I see. It was a land of desolation, without inhabitants I commenced to conclude, and so inclined to give up the search. To do so mattered little, for I was out on my own resources, and no human eye was present to make public my failure. Like the rest of my race, I love laudation for my success ; like the rest of my race, I hate censure or condemnation when defeated. To gain the first I would do much ; to avoid the latter, much more. Do none of our politicians suffer in a like manner ? Aye, they do, and often, I fear in modern times would sacrifice country, nation, all, in preference to sustaining a defeat. In acknowledging my weakness, I deem, though possibly erroneously, that I have a right to castigate others. But, I would ask, is what is pardonable in the sportsman, pardonable in the politician ? Decidedly not ; for the first acts for himself only, the latter for his constituents and country. Politicians of the present day are, at their best, but place-hunters ; patriotism, in its proper sense, is almost unknown

among them, and the sole object in life of many, is an unquenchable longing to filch from those that are better and less avaricious than themselves, the now more than historical "loaves and fishes" gained by their merits or by the patriotic deeds of their forefathers.

Leaving what is now a dirty business, viz., politics, on one side, I was about to shut up my glass, when over its focus passed a new object. It was not for a moment to be doubted what it was, for the erect tips of horn, supported by several spiral twists, told at once the tale. No, there was no room for doubt; it was the splendid adornments of a koodoo bull. The ornaments I viewed might not have been the property of either of the animals I made such a contemptible display over the previous evening, but if they were not the same, they were at least equal to those of my former acquaintances, so I resolved, *coûte que coûte*, to possess them.

Woman, in all your freaks of fashion, it matters not whether you wear chignons or puffs in your hair, cut it short behind like schoolboys, or friz it over your foreheads after the manner of Skye terriers, I can admire you in all and every type of *coiffure*; but, with nervousness, I almost hesitate to say that

the head adornments of that koodoo absorbed my longing for their possession more than ever did the golden locks or chestnut tresses of sprightly, vivacious New York belle or more developed, Cleopatra-like Anglo-Saxon beauty.

Thus my readers may well imagine the value I put upon the reward I should receive if I obtained the prize before me. To my ancestral halls, if I had any, I would have consigned them ; but, alas ! I have none. Blame me not for that circumstance, for at my ancestors' door is this heavy sin to be laid, and much I regret that I have it in my power to do so. But, although I have not spacious halls in which to place them, or lofty study in which to hang them, there is a nut-brown Juno, whose home is near the upper waters of bonnie, fretful, trout-loving Clyde, who could find a resting-place most suitable for these trophies ; and what would be more gratifying to me, they would always be under that loved one's eyes, that told descent from a race of heroes, and expressed enough fire in them to show that she could rival those ancestors in the deeds they had done, although, perhaps, they were only in sheep-stealing and cattle-lifting.

Perfect in form, beauteous in colour, and agile,

graceful, and fleet as you are, poor koodoo, your merits can scarcely save you from destruction. No, far from that, they only increase the desire of the pursuer to be your destroyer; so I creep from stone to stone, from rock to rock, at one time walking with almost broken back, the next minute crawling along the ground like an animal that revels in the mire, till at length a boulder is reached that stands erect upon a crest that overlooks many a hundred yards of the intervening country.

Yester-afternoon it was with me a case of bellows to mend when I came within shot of this glorious game. No such misfortune is the matter with my frail carcase this brilliant, glorious morning, for now the panting, exhausted man is replaced by one who stalks with the silence and stealth of the Indian, resolved that no mortal ailments shall prevent his unerring rifle doing its duty. From behind the giant boulder I long, anxiously, and disappointed gaze. Not a vestige of animal life is before me. Again and again I survey the ground in front of me, and, to my disgust, nothing animate can be discovered. I am dreaming, or must be in a trance, or my eyes, that have never deceived me before,

are now lying to me; for otherwise could such caution and strategy be thrown away? It was long before I could be convinced that I had been beaten; for to convince a man against his will is a hard matter indeed, but at last I was so. The cause of my indescribable disappointment I at length sought with my glass all over the middle distance. For a long time I was unrewarded in my search, but at length I discovered the truant koodoo more than a thousand yards off, standing with the full light of the early sun upon him (for the position he had selected was the summit of an adjoining ridge). No possible situation could have been better chosen to show the bonnie beast to perfection than the one it had taken, or, let me further add, to increase my own exasperation.

Through the medium of my glass I could almost with certainty judge the size, weight, condition, and perfections of the horns of the animal that had outwitted me. More, I believe—mind, kind reader, I only say believe—I saw a twinkling in the grand old bull's voluminous expressive eyes which said, "If you want to circumvent me you must get up earlier in the morning." Heaven forbid that I

should ever be compelled to make a practice of getting up before daybreak, as I had done on this memorable occasion.

I have heard Americans say in the Western States, when they were similarly outwitted, that they have felt like a skunk. Never having been a skunk, I do not know how that small animal feels when he has failed in his efforts to catch his prey, but that I felt extremely insignificant there cannot be the remotest doubt. And when I thought of the nut-brown lassie on the edge of Clyde, and of the impossible gift that I could ne'er bestow on her, I got riled, and did the most probable deed under the circumstances that could be expected—shut my glasses with a slam, perfectly indifferent whether I smashed them or not, and forthwith started for my mare.

On my way back to my beast, I brooded much over the mutability of human affairs; but, strange to say, that interesting study did not prevent my making safe and rapid progress over the rough ground I had to traverse; in fact, I must have been like one intoxicated, that finds the pavement too narrow for his progress, yet can find his way

to his bedroom, although the course to it is up the most intricate staircase that human ingenuity ever constructed. When all goes right with us in this world, we are courteous, considerate, and easily satisfied; when the opposite is the case, we are the reverse.

I found the gallant and willing little mare where I had left her; the saddle was soon girthed tightly on her back, and her patience while the operation was being performed was most exemplary. Still I was fractious and dissatisfied with her conduct, so spoke to her roughly and unkindly. When my feet were in the stirrup-irons, with her usual will and energy to please, she lay down to her long, easy gallop, destined soon to take me to the wagons. Inadvertently and unfortunately the good little darling stumbled, when I, in a spirit of revenge for such an unavoidable *contretemps*, cruelly chucked her delicate mouth about, and—would you believe it?—drove the cruel Latchfords into her silky flanks.

Disappointment in not having killed the object of my hunt could scarcely have made me such a brute. No! I much fear it was not having the trophies to lay at my bonnie lassie's feet that did it. Oh, woman, woman! you have much to answer for.

Mark Antony sacrificed all for his divinity. Although, in this realistic age, such sacrifices become less common, there are still, I think, men left among us, that would make them; and, strange as it may appear, I do not think the worse of them for that.

When speaking a few moments ago, I said that I thought it would be ungentlemanly to intrude upon the baboons, because their *wrows* and their *bambinos*, otherwise *kinders*, would probably be with them. Having made this statement, I will give my reasons for doing so. I am a Scotchman and a Celt, but all know that there is a wide divergence between the Celt of Scotland and the Celt of Ireland; in fact, there are Celts and there are Celts. Such being the case, I have carefully studied those differences which separate the Celt of Ireland from the Celt of Scotland. Coming to no hasty conclusion, and giving due weight to a matter that is worthy of more than ordinary consideration, I find that of all the races of human beings that I have become acquainted with, whether they be Digger Indians from the Rocky Mountains of Sonora, whether they be Kalmucks from the steppes and toundras of Siberia, or whether they be natives

of the interior of Africa, none so much resembles the baboon as an Irishman who claims his direct descent from Finn M'Coul, or some king whose name begins with an O' or Mc. Kings were as plentiful as blackberries in those days. What a delightfully aristocratic place Ireland must then have been to reside in! I have stood upon heights in Connemara that overlook the broad Atlantic, and I have rested upon the bluffs that back Carlisle and Camden Forts, in Co. Cork, and I believe that the sight of angry breakers and turbulent ocean has a natural tendency to make a ferocious people. In the Drakensberg, where they attain their loftiest summits, commanding the undulating pastures of Natal or the widespread flats of the Free State, there baboons exist in numbers. Irishmen of the lower orders have the Atlantic Ocean to gaze upon, the baboons have their waving plains; the one has water, the other has land as a prospect, but the result is wonderfully similar in producing likeness in physiognomy. Of course I only mean such Irish as one sees in the steerage of emigrant ships, or loafing about the "Five Points," New York, or idling round the grain elevators of Chicago, or doing a little steve-

doring on the *levee* of St. Louis, or attending political meetings, where they do a lot of mouthy oratory. In no way do I make the above comparisons applicable to Ulster men, for the reason that that province is as far out of Ireland, and distinct from it, as New Jersey is said to be out of and distinct from the United States.

Note the Connemara Irishman, with his heavy jaw, his protruding upper lip and teeth, that, if it were possible for them to be hid, it would be a charity to hide them. The same are the characteristics of these interesting animals that are to be found in every rocky spur or stony kloof of our South African dependencies. Never having associated with baboons, and thus made them my personal acquaintances, it is quite possible that I make errors in describing their social life ; but, as far as I can judge, they are an exceedingly moral people. I am not aware that they require to have legal referees, for the simple reason that disputes or differences of opinion seldom arise between them. I have never heard of divorce or elopement ever occurring amongst them. If serious dissensions do not occur, trifling ones will occasionally take place, for sometimes an old grand-

father baboon will whack a youngster who has been indiscreet enough to take his tail for a bell-pull, or his majestic gait for a piece of assumption.

But an idea arises in my mind: supposing human beings were suddenly gifted with tails, they would at first be naturally repulsive to look upon, because an innovation upon our present structure, but, once the eye became accustomed to them, they would be thought an adornment, or scarcely attract attention, and then how useful they could be made if well developed. Thus the agricultural population, by having a metal addition attached to their tails, could with them hoe the ground, the man of fashion lead his St. Bernard by it, and those treasures, the jewels of our sex's eyes, "the ladies," wear their bracelets, bangles, and rings upon them.

Baboons are monogamous, and if fate or accident should deprive them of their helpmate, the Bechuanas tell me that they never marry again. Thus, when a baboon becomes a widower, he retires from the *coterie*, composed of happy spouses, and devotes himself to the service of the commonwealth by becoming a permanent sentry. This is self-sacrificing, all will acknowledge, and few human beings would

do the same; but it shows that animals, whom lordly and self-assuming man looks down upon, have some points about them that deserve admiration.

I don't think that School Boards have been introduced among baboons, for the reason that they cannot count correctly. Thus, if you want to shoot them, the best plan to adopt is to enter a mealie garden, in parties of four or five, upon which they are in the habit of making depredations, when one should drop behind and secrete himself; and the baboons, not being able to distinguish between four and five, return to the scene of their spoliation, unconscious that a latent enemy has been left behind. This plan, when adopted at dusk, is generally successful. I have never practised shooting these interesting animals in this way; but then I am neither a Moonlighter nor a Home Ruler.

The children of baboons are brought up to industrious habits; their mothers at an early age take them forth and explain to them what they should and should not eat, and where they should seek for their support. Onions and vegetables of a garlic-like savour are their favourite food, and such being the case, I should imagine that the parents

occasionally find the breath of their offspring militates very strongly against their treating them with that affection which they otherwise would do. Moreover, baboons are exceedingly fond of eating centipedes and scorpions ; for this eccentricity nobody can blame them, for, after all, both have a strong resemblance to shrimps, and we all know how popular tea and shrimps are at Greenwich. I have said a great deal about the ordinary habits of baboons. I have compared them with human beings, to whom they might feel offended at being compared, and I can confidently state that no pluckier brute ever was born.

On one occasion, when in the vicinity of Harrismith, in the Orange Free State, I surprised a number of baboons—I would not do so now, but I did so then—viz., hied on to them half-a-dozen greyhounds, that were at my heels ; the whole party of baboons fled, but one youngster seemed incapable of keeping his place among his seniors, and was overtaken by my dogs. Rapidly this victim would have been destroyed, but a couple of the patriarchs of the drove turned back and fought such a gallant battle that they actually repulsed the enemy, although three to one against them.

When this occurred, "Chummy" and I jumped from our nags and rushed to the support of our canine pets, but when we saw the beasts make such a stand and thought in what a proper spirit they had done so, we desisted. I am very partial to having a baboon in my wagon; but the person who indulges in that taste must have a youngster, who has not acquired the vices of his ancestors; he can then mould the young creature's manners to a certain degree into habits suited to the ideas usually enjoyed by a Christian people.

While I have been making these notes, I have been travelling through a country where baboons abound, and from every ridge of rock and precipitous kloof that we have passed by, they have indicated their presence with their *basso profundo* voice, saying plainly that they object to the advance of wagons, alias civilisation, into their country.

Where we outspanned was simply a wash, otherwise a vley on a small scale—that is, an indentation in the ground where rain water has settled. There was enough for the beasts to drink, but not an abundance, so it became necessary that we should hurry up to the next place where we should find water.

The spoor about our immediate vicinity was so numerous that I took the Totty with me and went in search of some of the game that had made it. A number of Bushmen had joined our *cortège*, and judging from their contracted physiques and starvation belts, there could scarcely be a doubt that they had been existing on very short commons. To shoot game for the requirements of these poor people ceased to be a sin, but became a duty. To the *rechte hand pat* (right-hand path), after a trudge of half-an-hour, we got into what in Africa would be considered forest-land; but forest-land in this part of the world must not be confused with the beeches of Burnham or the old oaks of Cadzow Forest. Soon after I entered this wooded district I noted a bird flitting from tree to tree in front of me. The Totty said there was game not far off; and, sure enough, he was right, for immediately afterwards a steinbok left some bushes in my front, trotted across an open glade, and then stood as if desirous of having a closer acquaintance with the European intruder, who thus unexpectedly forced himself upon his observation. That halt was fatal; the steinbok fell, for a 500 Express bullet from my Tolley rifle passed through his pretty

flank. After taking his hide and such meat as was desirable, we wandered onward further to the east, our inducement to do so being that the spoor of several oryx (gemsbok) led in that direction. Every sportsman likes to add the horns of this noble beast to his collection of trophies, for, independent of their great beauty, this is the accepted animal from which our fabled unicorn is taken. But the oryx was not to be stalked, and Totty and I fruitlessly wandered on till an hour before sundown, when we sat down upon two fallen mimosas, and conversed upon our want of success, and the probability that we should have better luck on a future occasion.

Sportsmen at home would sit side by side when discussing such momentous questions, but we sat *vis-à-vis*, for why?—it gave both our optics the control of the distance beyond us; for in this country it is imperative to guard against your being stalked while you are stalking. When the shadows began to become so heavy and solid as to remind me that a past day had to be added to the *répertoire* of my memory, we started up together, and knocked the ashes out of our pipes with the intention of hurrying homewards. It is needless to say that I am an

inveterate smoker, and my Hottentot companion was the same ; to you, who know not the delights of tobacco, I need not urge the pleasures to be derived from its use. You that are smokers well know how painful it is to deprive yourselves of even the last whiff. But night told us we must be going, or else we should sleep without the friendly shelter of our wagons. Therefore westward we went, and went and went, till the sun was almost down, and the shadow of one tree ran into that of another, and "birds that were not canny began to talk from nook and cranny," telling plainly that the draperies of night would soon be over all things, when we came upon a vley.

A *vley*, my readers already know, means a pool of water, and this pool of water was just such as the most fastidious could have desired to make. Fancy a long sheet of liquid standing in a wood, with grassy slopes surrounding it for, at least, a hundred yards from where the timber ceased, and its clear, pellucid contents margined with a wide streak of fairest snow-white sand. We approached it, we tasted its waters, and I laved my head in it, it was such an unexpected pleasure ; but when satisfied I turned round to see

what had become of my attendant, for I had missed him. My eyes had not far to search; behind me he stood, his big eyes, bleary and chocolate-coloured as they usually are, were now distended to double their ordinary size, a fixed, intent stare was in them, and an expression that spoke big words, nay volumes. What was he staring at? What was the fascination that had such an influence upon him? A trifle to the uninitiated, a mere bagatelle, a simple indentation in the sand, but to the experienced it told a tale that the monarch of the brute creation had consecrated the spot by placing his foot upon it. It was the spoor of a lion! Thus we leave the small game of South Africa, and enter into the habitat of the larger. My reader is not, however, to suppose that the lesser, but none the less attractive, animals cease to be met where the larger and more formidable are to be found, and in pursuit of which I hope soon to take him.

THE END.

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